CANADA'S HISTORY MAGAZINE

The Beaver

OCTOBER | NOVEMBER 2001 $4.95

Kathlyn's Letters

Valour on the home front

Prairie Serendipity

Climate debate and grassland fate

Jack Miner: The Man Who Would Have Dominion

Journalist Kit Coleman

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On the cover: Harvey and Kathlyn Fish, circa 1945. Courtesy Lynn Fish.

Letters

Daughters not dotty

I HAVE NOT READ the book, *Whose National Security?*, reviewed in your August/September issue; but the review by Gavin Murphy puzzled me somewhat. Murphy seems taken aback by the fact that the IODE, apparently, could believe that in a "communist Canada" workers might be sent to a slave labour camp for lateness, or that one might be shot for attempting to "escape" the country.

Murphy must be too young to remember that between 1929 (with the infamous Shakhty workers trials) and the 1950s, those were precisely the punishments often inflicted on Soviet citizens; such Stalinist measures were introduced to East and East Central European, and Chinese, citizens between 1947 and the early 1950s. Accused as "wreckers," "slackers," or even as enemy agents ("saboteurs"), workers were shipped off by the thousands. Leaving the country ("escaping") without permission was regarded as an act of treason. The IODE may have overreacted, but what other examples would it have at hand?

Canadian communist party members loudly proclaimed the rightness of Stalin's version of Marxism-Leninism, cheering on the Stalinist show trials of the late 1930s, vigorously opposing the war against Nazi Germany, 1939–41, happily supporting Soviet annexation and slaughter in the Baltic republics, and saluting the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia as late as 1968.

I can say nothing about the book, not having read it. I know several of the contributors and respect their scholarship. But the review is sadly anachronistic.

Larry Black
Director of the Centre for Research on Canadian-Russian Relations, Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

The *Beaver* welcomes readers' comments. E-mail us at <cnhs@historysociety.ca> or write to *The Beaver*, 478–167 Lombard Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3B 0T6. Please include your address and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for clarity or length.

Massey defended

THE ARTICLE "THE MASSEY REPORT, Fifty Years Later" by Paul Litt [June/July 2001] tells at least as much about the mindset of many contemporary commentators as it does about Vincent Massey, his fellow commissioners, and his report. Put simply, present commentators often want to see themselves as having "progressed" beyond the stultified earlier minds that were "anglophilic and elitist," as being more enlightened, as more in contact with the people, free – at last – of "Victorian cultural values." They want to rap Massey's knuckles for not being delighted to be living "next door to the great liberal democratic power, the United States."

Three things need saying. The report was from a Royal Commission "on national development in the arts, letters, and sciences," not in soap operas and commercial radio. Even today, such a commission would be staffed with intellectuals who have some culture. Secondly, the commissioners received (and welcomed) briefs from a very wide spectrum of organizations representing "ordinary" Canadians – and did a pretty good job of reflecting the things those concerned and vocal Canadians were thinking at the time. Thirdly, the Massey Report is held up as one of the most literate reports ever written in Canada on like subjects. Maybe the commission did more and better things than Paul Litt is willing to acknowledge.

Robin Mathews
Vancouver, British Columbia

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Recognition due

I WAS VERY INTERESTED IN YOUR ARTICLE, "Anatomy of a Rescue" [June/July 2001]. While this tragic event was unfolding, I was sleeping safely in my comfortable bed at the U.S. Naval Air Station, Argentia. It was wartime, and we did not learn of it for some weeks. I was a civilian employee of the U.S. Navy, and while I had nothing to do with armed naval ships, I was involved with nonnaval supply ships bringing supplies to Argentia. On several occasions I was ordered to sea in what I remember as a large whale boat, with a crew of six or so U.S. marines. As a humble civilian Newfoundlander, I did not enjoy much camaraderie with the U.S. Marines, but all sorts of questions as to nationality of ship, neutrality, etc., made my presence very convenient.

The heroic efforts of the people of that part of the coast where the tragedy occurred, and where so many lives were saved, have never been adequately recognized in my opinion, simply because, like me, they were not American but humble citizens of the then Dominion of Newfoundland. I have only one comment on the article: the author mentions the ships as having radar. I may be wrong, but in 1942, I think that it was, rather, loran [long-range navigation]. I left Argentia shortly after this episode, but remember that many of the bodies were buried in a common grave in Argentia, and after the war's end were taken stateside and reinterred in their respective home towns.

Gordon P. Williams
Westbank, British Columbia

Dead right

THE ARTICLE ON THE STRANDING of the *Pollux* and *Truxton* revived old memories; in the extensive storm of that night, my own ship, S.S. *Picotee*, had to break rigorous radio silence to get a DF triangulation, and almost grounded on Sable Island. The term "dead reckoning" derives from "ded" (for "deduced") reckoning. However, as one of my old captains humorously pointed out, the more common term is better applied – his punch line: "If you don't reckon right, you're dead."

It was gratifying also that the part the Newfoundlanders played in the rescue was brought out; many other older seamen owed their lives to such brave and unstinting actions.

Thomas W. Robinson
Big River, Saskatchewan

Forbidden fruit

WHEN I SAW THE PICTURE of the pre-World War I home of William Penland in the "Album" section of the April/May 2001 issue, I recognized it as being next door to one in which I spent the first three years of my life (1933–1936). We left when I was three years old, but I used to visit it almost every day in the ensuing summers to play with my cousin. He and I would occasionally hop over the fence into the yard of the Penland house and surreptitiously pick crabapples from a tree that was in the extreme southeast corner of the lot.

When I think back on those occasions, I wonder what possessed us to jump that fence to get those crabapples, especially since the lady in the house behind the Penland's used to sell us a large kraft-paper bag of crabapples for five or ten cents. I guess ill-gotten gains tasted better.

Donald Kent
Regina, Saskatchewan

Jazz boys

THE ARTICLE "TOOT SWEET: When Jazz Ruled Montreal" [June/July 2001] certainly stirred up memories for me. I grew up in Montreal, lived in Notre Dame de Grace, and went to Montreal High School. In my final year at Montreal High, 1934–35, I sat behind a young man whose last name was Duncan and whose seat was in the center of the front row. We enjoyed visiting with each other at breaks between classes and at lunch. He is the only student remember from that class. He soon learned from me, I am sure, that I lived in a WASP neighborhood, and that both my parents had emigrated from the U.K. at the beginning of the century. He told me he lived in the St. Antoine area of Montreal, that his father was a Pullman porter, and that he played the saxophone. He was the only black student in the class. I tried to recruit him to join a small band a friend was organizing, but he wisely declined the invitation. He may be the Lloyd Duncan pictured on page 28. He was a good and conscientious student, and I often wonder how his life turned out.

Brian How
Ithaca, New York

The Tweedsmuir connection

THE PHOTO OF FDR at Quebec in 1936 [June/July 2001, p. 36] with the Governor General Lord Tweedsmuir reminded me of the late John, Lord Tweedsmuir [his son] who lived up to the last year of his life here at Kingston Bagpuize in Oxfordshire, UK. He died some five years ago, having moved back to Scotland for his final few months. He was a charming old gentleman and, until he felt too old to drive, visited my pharmacy for his medicines. Always interesting to talk to, he frequently referred to his deep affection for Canada, and his time spent there. I am fortunate to receive your magazine, it being a present from my kid sister, living in Mississauga. Keep up the good work.

David Morgan
Kingston Bagpuize
Oxfordshire, UK

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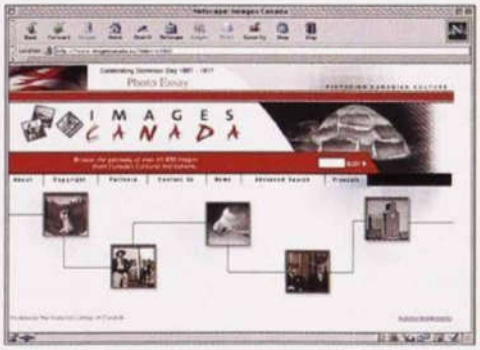
The Maple Leaf Legacy Project's logo (left) is an adaptation of a carving made in the walls of a tunnel at Vimy, France, by an unknown Canadian soldier in 1917.

Virtual remembrance

And here we were exhausted just thinking about having to organize our latest holiday snaps, when we learn that someone has decided to organize the photographing of each and every single one of Canada's war graves, annotate them, and post them on the Internet to create a kind of virtual national war cemetery. Considering that Canada has almost 115,000 war dead from the Boer War, World War I, World War II, and Korea, as well as peacekeepers killed since 1945, and that seventy-two countries have Canadian war graves, the task gives a fresh coat of paint to the word *daunting*. The man who taken up this formidable task is Steven Douglas, a Canadian living in England, who, late in the last century, decided to do something special for the millennium that would make use of his love of computers. Hence, the Maple Leaf Legacy Project, as it's called. Douglas is not going out and photographing all the graves himself, however. He once estimated that would take him more than six years worth of eight-hour days with no holidays, lunch, or loo breaks. He is, instead, recruiting volunteers, and, as of this writing, has had nearly 32,000 graves photographed. So far, there is no searchable database – that is in the offing – but there is an informational website at <**www.mllp.demon.co.uk**>. The hope is that one day, families and friends of Canada's war dead unable to visit foreign gravesites due to distance and expense will have another way to pay their respects. Make an e-pilgrimage of sorts.

Website of the month

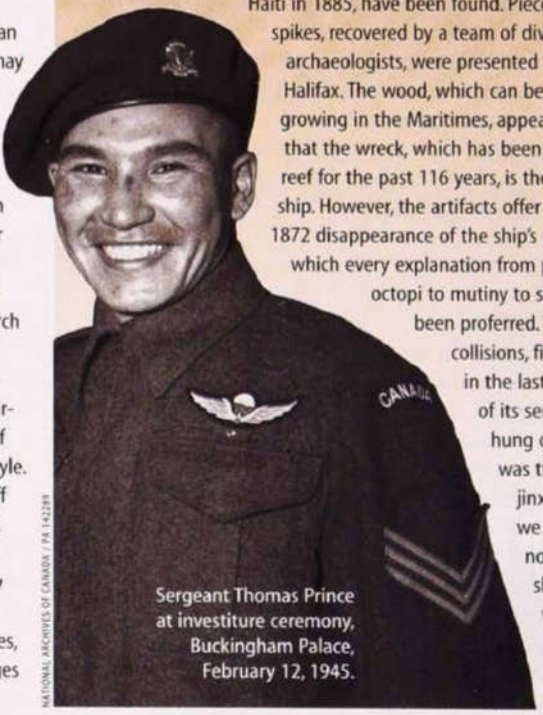
And in news from the National Library of Canada, over 65,000 Canadian images from the end of the eighteenth century to the late 1990s may now be viewed on line through a new Images Canada website <**www.images canada.ca**>. We tried – for no particular reason other than sheer eccentricity – keying the word *fun* into the search doodad and – whaddyaknow – up came some archival pictures of fun, Canadian-style. Chautauqua staff goofin' around in Prieceville, Saskatchewan in 1931 looked like fun. Earl Haig, head of the British Ex-Servicemen's League, receiving a ceremonial gift from the chief of the Sarcee band at the 1925 Calgary Stampede looked somehow less fun, but maybe he was having a whale of a time. At any rate, with five Canadian archives contributing their photographs, illustrations, and caricatures, and a whole whack more archives coming down the pike in phase two, Images Canada appears to be a historic photophile's dream.



Lost and found

Well, our lost-and-found department has been busy of late. And that's saying a lot because in the world of history, something can get lost and not get found until decades, yea, centuries later. We throw out to you, for example, Samuel de Champlain's astrolabe. He lost it in May, 1613, near what is today Cobden, Ontario, in the Ottawa Valley ("Where the *heck* is that astrolabe?" he fumed). It was found 254 years later by a fourteen-year-old farm boy ("Wow! Champlain's long-lost astrolabe," he cried). More recently, however, the ten war medals of Tommy Prince, Canada's most decorated aboriginal war veteran, which were misplaced (possibly pawned or lost in a house fire, according to reports) after his death in 1977, and which reappeared at a 1997 Toronto auction only to disappear into an anonymous Nova Scotian's collection, have now re-reappeared. And, if all goes as planned, they will be placed on permanent display at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature in Winnipeg, Prince's home town. The medals, which include the King George Military Medal, presented to Prince by King George VI at Buckingham Palace, were purchased for $75,000 at auction in August in London, Ontario, by Prince's family. Prince, a member of the First Canadian Special Service Battalion in World War II, was honoured for acts of bravery inside enemy territory in Italy and in France. He also fought with the Second Battalion of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in the Korean War.

Meanwhile, in warmer climes, the remains of the Canadian brigantine *Mary Celeste*, famous for being discovered crossing the Atlantic in 1872 with its crew mysteriously vanished, then lost off the coast of Haiti in 1885, have been found. Pieces of wood and spikes, recovered by a team of divers and marine archaeologists, were presented in August in Halifax. The wood, which can be traced to trees growing in the Maritimes, appears to confirm that the wreck, which has been lying in a coral reef for the past 116 years, is the famous ghost ship. However, the artifacts offer no clues to the 1872 disappearance of the ship's crew, about which every explanation from pirates to giant octopi to mutiny to space aliens has been proferred. With numerous collisions, fires, and deaths in the last thirteen years of its service, a cloud hung over the ship. It was thought to be jinxed, something we hope does not apply to the ship's artifacts, which are expected to tour museums in the future.



Sergeant Thomas Prince at investiture ceremony, Buckingham Palace, February 12, 1945.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA / PA 142289

And curse Sir Walter Raleigh ...

Museological interest can't be a better sign that something is passé. When the Royal Canadian Spittoon Museum came calling for the decorative brass vessels we had lying about the house, we knew the jig was up with that little habit. Now we learn that the Red Deer and District Museum has mounted an exhibit on the history of smoking. Smoking is history? Oh, oh. Can our fine collection of Pismo Beach souvenir ashtrays be far behind?

Seemed odd at first that a Red Deer museum would be the site of an exhibit devoted to – of all things – smoking. We couldn't recall passing any tobacco plantations on our last outing to central Alberta. But, land o'goshen, it turns out Albertans didn't grow the stuff; they just rolled the stuff (after importing it – from Cuba). In 1914, Alberta produced over 4.5 million cigars – a fair number for a population of under half a million people. The Red Deer and District Museum's exhibit, *The Seduction of Smoking*, however, doesn't begin or end with early twentieth-century stogies. The exhibit begins, naturally, with the importance of tobacco in the ceremonies of native cultures, who began it all. (Tobacco is a New World plant, after all.) It ends with the glamorization of smoking by Hollywood (Paul Henreid lighting two cigarettes for Bette Davis in *Now, Voyageur*, for example). In between, the exhibit – which continues until November 18 – explores such topics as tobacco and the fur trade, smoking and the romance of the wild west, early attempts at tobacco reform (the gals at the Women's Christian Temperance Union weren't just opposed to booze, you know), cigarettes as the gift of choice to overseas troops in wartime, marketing to women and girls, and the successes of the Alberta tobacco business. Truly one smokin' exhibit. We just hope no one is contemplating mounting *The Seduction of Pork Rinds*. Then we'll know the pleasure of fattening foods will soon be denied us.

Cover girl

Given that the *Beaver* is a history magazine and fairly removed from current events, our covers tend to feature people who are – to be perfectly frank – dead. *Vanity Fair*, we ain't. So it is a rare pleasure to announce that the cover girl of the *Beaver*'s June/July 2001 issue, Bernice Jordan, who was a dancer in the Montreal jazz clubs of the 1930s and 1940s, is very much alive, quite well, and still living in Montreal, thank you very much. She is today Bernice Jordan Whims, having in 1943 married Bill Whims, a soldier on leave from Petawawa whom she met at Rockhead's Paradise, one of the legendary jazz clubs of the day. Nicknamed "Bunny," Bernice began her show-business career as a child singing in the church choir and in amateur singing competitions (the prize money from which she dutifully handed over to her mother), gravitating to dance in admiration of American show girls who travelled to Montreal to entertain in the clubs. As a high-school student she was invited to fill in when a show was a girl short one evening, and the rest, as they say, is history. She spent the Depression and the war years dancing in the Montreal jazz clubs and singing with bands on the road in remoter communities of Quebec and Ontario, and maintained her show-business career into the 1960s even as the Montreal jazz scene went into decline. Along the way, she raised four children. Widowed since the early 1970s, she is now a grandmother of four and still continues to sing in church and at community centres. She is soon to turn eighty-four, and with knee and hip operations doesn't do the hoofing for which she was famous. Or at least probably shouldn't, even in a modified form. But how about when she goes to a dance? "I can't resist it," she allows. "It stays in your bones in some way."

Bernice (Jordan) Whims then and now.
In 1999, she and two other Montreal show girls, Olga Spencer Foderingham and Tina Baines Brereton, were featured in a National Film Board production, *Show Girls*, about the golden era of the Montreal jazz clubs. Bernice points out that her costume, green in the colouration applied to the June/July cover's original black-and-white photograph, was, in fact, red.

Take the day off

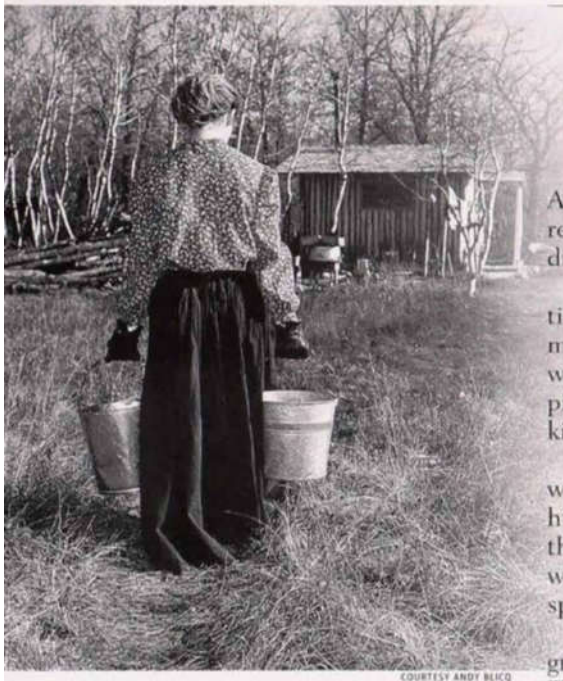
October 1: To observe the election in 1951 of Charlotte Whitton as mayor of Ottawa, Canada's first woman to become a mayor. If you're a woman repeat her famous line: "Whatever women do, they must do it twice as well as men to be thought half so good ... luckily, this is not difficult." If you're a man: sulk.

October 13: To honour the introduction in 1961 of the Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Bill in the Saskatchewan legislature, the genesis of Canada's national medicare programs. Recite the five mantras of medicare: accessibility, universality, comprehensiveness, portability, administration.

November 6: To celebrate Thanksgiving as declared by Parliament in 1879. Ask yourself: why not celebrate Thanksgiving twice? You can never get enough turkey.

November 17: To mark the opening in 1938 of Lion's Gate Bridge, linking Vancouver with the North Shore. Read *Goren's New Bridge Complete*.

Reality TV & Lessons from the Land



COURTESY ANDY BLICQ

The first casualty was the illusion that pioneer life was going to be anything like the sentimental world invented for the American TV drama, *Little House on the Prairie*. Our pioneers' world was sheer misery.

They knew what to do when the time came to bury Malcolm "Mac" Smith, last June. His days would end in the company of fine horses and the people who knew him and loved him and who understood what his passing meant in a tightly knit farming community like Argyle, Manitoba.

After the funeral service, friends and family moved Mac's casket onto a neighbour's wagon and a team of massive black Percherons made short work of his final journey – a two-mile trip out to the stillness of the prairie and the Argyle cemetery, where he was laid to rest among the other pioneers of the district.

Opinions expressed in Explorations are the author's own, and do not necessarily reflect those of the *Beaver*.

Mac had been sick for a long, long time. The doctors said he wouldn't make it through the winter, but he did, watching for a couple of modern-day pioneers from his favourite seat by the kitchen window.

"Mac was always interested in what was going on in the project," says his widow, Audrey Smith. "It seemed that was what kept him going. And when it was over he just went down in spirit."

The "project" was a television program called *Pioneer Quest: A Year In The Real West*. Mac's affection for the stars of History Television's leap into the murky waters of reality TV, and their attachment to him, are central to explaining the bewildering success of the show.

The premise for *Pioneer Quest* was simple. Two couples would leave the modern world behind and spend a year living on the Manitoba prairie as settlers. It was a return to life in the 1870s. No electricity. No television. No toilet paper. The couples – Tim and Deanna Treadway from Kenora, Ontario, and Frank and Alana Logie from Fergus, Ontario – were selected and each supplied with a chunk of land, a horse and wagon, and all the essentials a nineteenth-century homesteader would need to break the soil and build a simple house capable of withstanding a fearsome prairie winter. The reward? An experience of a lifetime and $100,000 per couple. But once they were there and the cameras began to roll, it quickly became a personal and a physical struggle with nature and human nature, and a rude awakening for us all.

"As hard as we thought it would be, it's way harder," said an exhausted Frank Logie after his first couple of days on the land. "I think of any job I've done, no matter how stinky or dirty it was, this is always harder."

And then the rain began to fall. Record precipitation in June turned our little corner of virgin prairie into a maternity ward for mosquitoes. By the end of July it seemed as though Mother Nature was intent on voting our pioneers off the island. But this was not *Survivor*, last year's blockbuster hit and the benchmark against which all the other programs in the reality-TV craze are being measured. For those who may have been in a coma for the last year, *Survivor* is like the Olympics of office politics – a test of human cunning in which the contestants eliminate each other one-by-one and the last person standing collects a million-dollar prize.

There was conflict among our pioneers, too. But, by far, they found their

greatest challenge on the land, and that made all the difference. The first casualty was the illusion that pioneer life was going to be anything like the sentimental world invented for the American TV drama, *Little House on the Prairie*. Our pioneers' world was sheer misery. Everything had to be done with horsepower and hand tools, which were surprisingly complicated to master. They were picking off wood ticks from places too impolite to mention, and every day ended and began in a sodden, floorless tent. The time in between was filled with a backbreaking, and ultimately futile, attempt to break the land and plant a crop. They had better luck building two impressively snug log cabins.

All the while we fretted as they withstood what a *National Post* reviewer later described as an "arse-whupping" by Mother Nature. It was hard to watch and even harder not to put down the camera and help. But from the start we made the choice to set them up on the land and then see what happened.

Unlike *Survivor*, where the participants were subjected to a series of contrived tests, our pioneers were mostly left to succeed or fail on the strength of their wits, their brawn, and their all-important sense of humour. The camera stood by, a silent witness to their struggle.

Mac lived just around the corner and early on he pointed out that the pioneers' biggest problem was their century. Mac grew up in a time when using horses was as much a part of life as Windows '98 is today. Our television pioneers had little of the innate knowledge of the nineteenth century. Instead, they had to subvert all their twenty-first-century expectations and attempt to relive the past – and that turned out to be the show's greatest strength. Frank and Alana and Tim and Deanna seemed to be just like us. It was easy to watch them struggle and to imagine, with a shudder, what it would be like to be in their shoes. Is it possible to truly return to another time? As the weeks and months went by it became clear that the best we could do was make the attempt. What emerged as one of the central themes of the shows was the struggle to keep the modern world at bay. In the end, *Pioneer Quest* was not a historical reenactment. It was an examination of what it's like for twenty-first-century people to attempt to live as prairie homesteaders.

Although Mac Smith chided us for our sometimes clumsy efforts at getting the equipment right, he knew what the pioneers were going through and he respected them for it. Through a bitterly cold December, they got up every morning and drew water from the well for the animals and blew out their oil lamps every night before bed. They were living it, and that was authentic.

Mac made his final visit to the site to offer some advice on greasing the wooden axles on the wagon. It was a stunning October afternoon. The houses were built, and only winter, the last great challenge, lay ahead. Mac returned to his memories of the early days, and Alana and Frank Logie sat quietly and listened. This twenty-something pair were from another world, young professionals looking for an adventure. They had found more than they had bargained for. Mac's story had become their story, and its telling important.

In early November, we all held our breath as the first two hours were broadcast. Would the audience care about what we were learning? There were plenty of doubters, those who wondered whether this was going to be an all-too-earnest, all-Canadian attempt to reproduce the success of *Survivor*. *Pioneer Quest* turned out to be the highest-rated program ever shown on History Television. It was a hit, but on its own terms.

"Our friends say it doesn't look anything like a Canadian TV show," exclaimed Deanna Treadway, two weeks after the first episodes were shown and mail from friends and family finally arrived at the homestead. As a longtime employee of the CBC, I was horrified by this judgment – Canada's TV culture dismissed as castor oil. But in the end I took it as a compliment and a lesson.

What made *Pioneer Quest* a success? Some of it was timing. A lot of it was our pioneers, whose candour and sense of humour engaged the audience. But mostly it was because this was not a game show. It was real and they were living it and, like Mac Smith, the audience has an antenna for something authentic.

Some readers of this magazine may dismiss *Pioneer Quest* as entertainment, a confection rather than a contribution to serious discourse about Canada's history. I see it as an addendum to archival research: A way to engage those who dismiss all Canadian history as boring and, more important, a way to capture what it really felt like to be a homesteader, long after the experience has been lost to time.

When Mac Smith died, his vivid recollection of pioneer times went to the Argyle Cemetery with him. It's the same story everywhere on the prairies, where Mac's generation – the tail-end of the horsepower era – is fading away. For me, *Pioneer Quest* stands as a powerful antidote to the inclination in our culture to retool Mac's experiences into a bunch of saccharine greeting-card images. He and all the others deserve more.

Andy Blicq was writer and director of *Pioneer Quest*.

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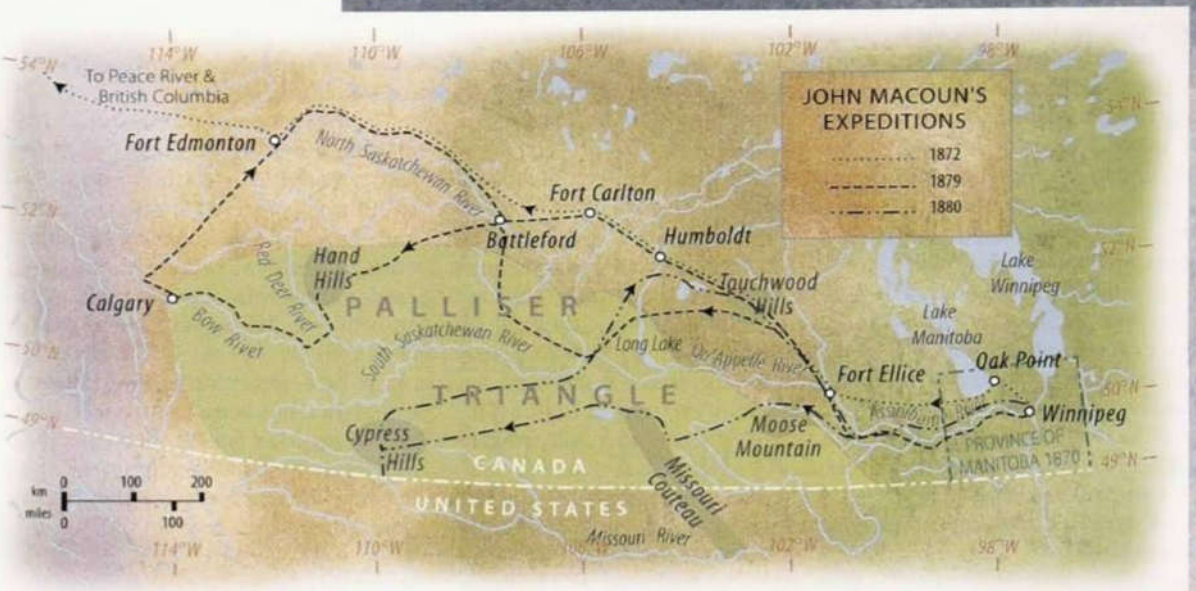
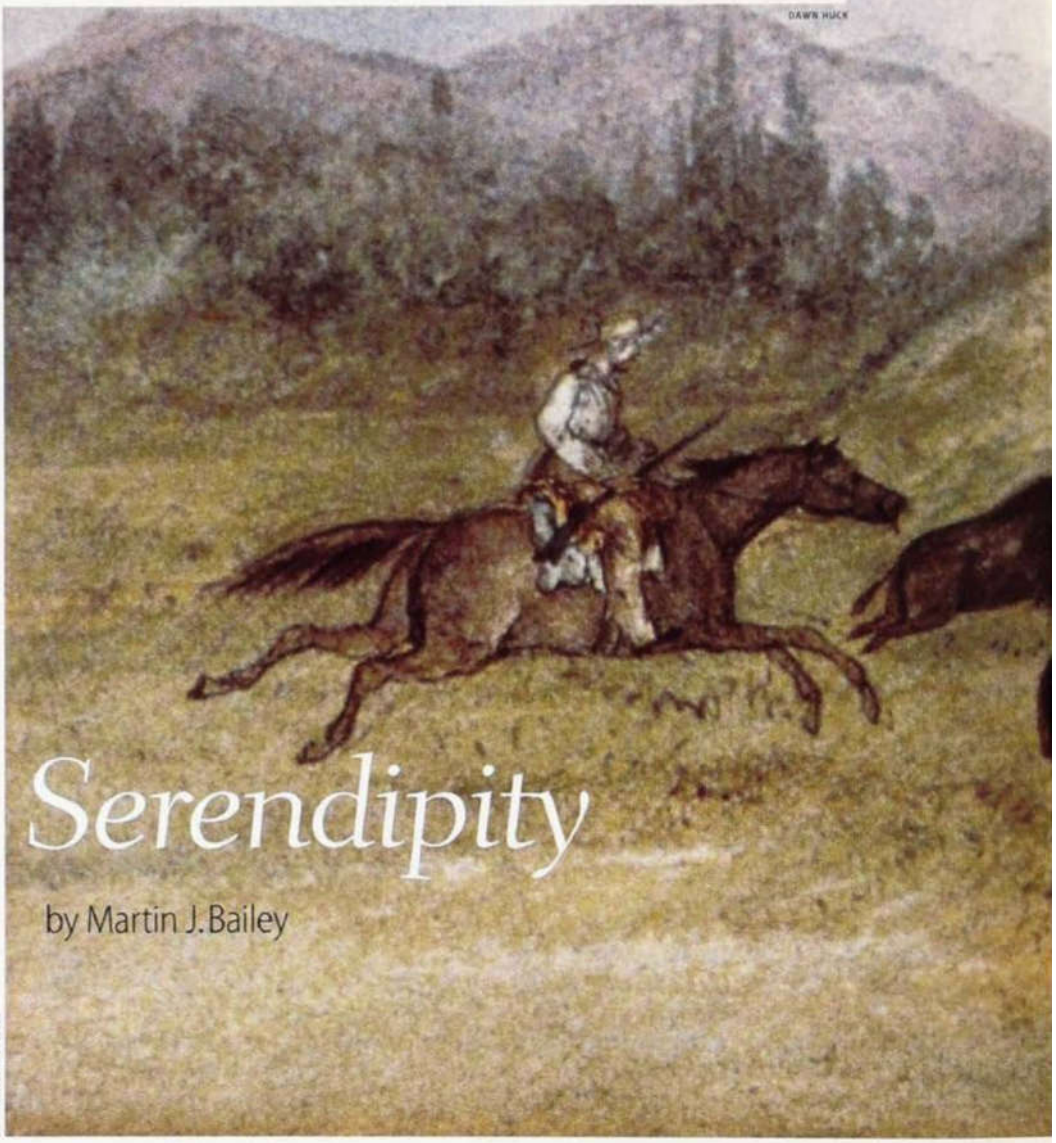


Few in the nineteenth century cared about the true nature of Canada's southern plains until Ottawa entertained visions of a transcontinental railway and mass settlement. Then it became urgent. Were the prairies as arid and infertile as generally believed? Naturalist John Macoun set out to find the answer. What he came up with changed the course of a railway. And a country.

Prairie Serendipity

by Martin J. Bailey



DAWN HUCK

B.C. ARCHIVES / PDP00610

On July 15, 1872, John Macoun, a forty-one-year-old Irish-born botanist, was travelling to Lake Superior from Toronto by boat intending to study the plants of the Great Lakes region. By chance, he met Sandford Fleming, chief engineer of a proposed new railway from Montreal to the Pacific coast, who invited him to join his surveying party, which was travelling west across the North-West Territories and through British Columbia. Macoun – who, though self-taught, had become chair of the natural history department of Albert College, Belleville – would act as the party's botanist. The accidental meeting proved providential. Between 1872 and 1881, Macoun would take part in five surveys of western Canada under Fleming's aegis. His analysis of the prairie landscape and his enthusiasm for its potential would help shape the course of the railway and in doing so determine the shape of the country.

Through the summer of 1872, Macoun travelled from Red River northwest to the Peace River district, noting plant life, soil conditions, and climate. At Oak Point on the east shore of Lake Manitoba, he saw in one day over four hundred different plant species, a number and variety greater than that of Ontario and the Maritimes where the soil, he concluded, was similar. He travelled to Fort Ellice near the confluence of the Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle Rivers, just east of the present-day Manitoba-Saskatchewan border, over wet and muddy ground. It was "a perfect garden with rich soil and great numbers of autumn flowers," he wrote. Then he proceeded through the Qu'Appelle Valley to the Touchwood Hills, about a hundred kilometres north of present-day Regina. "Still we felt that there was no sign of want of fertility. All the land was good."

Macoun travelled through an area two earlier surveyor-explorers, John Palliser and Henry Youle Hind, had termed the "fertile belt," the outer rim of a triangle the base of which stretched along the forty-ninth parallel from Red River in the east to the Alberta foothills in the west and the apex of which was the Battle River watershed in northwestern Saskatchewan. A mix of trees and open spaces – sometimes called transitional parkland – the area bordering the outer rim was deemed suitable for agriculture. The inner body of the triangle, which was treeless grassland, was, according to

Buffalo Hunting, Western Prairie, 1840, by Sir Henry James Warre, 1819–1898.

In the decade before John Palliser set out on his expedition through western Canada, Warre, a British officer on duty in Canada, made drawings of the territory, which he later gathered into his book, *Sketches in North America and the Oregon Territory*.

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE / 60136

Inset: By producing optimistic assessments of the prairies that supported the federal government's plans for the region, John Macoun (1831–1921) became a favourite of the Conservative party and was rewarded an appointment to the Geological Survey of Canada in 1882 as the first Dominion botanist. He remained a zealot for Canada as a land of promise and a tireless field naturalist, discovering approximately a thousand new plant species, many of which were named after him. His enormous specimen collection became the foundation for the National Museum of Natural Science.

Palliser and Hind, semi-arid – an extension of the Great American Desert to the south, and thus a barrier to cultivation and settlement. But Macoun, when his first prairie sojourn ended in September 1872, questioned his predecessors' conclusions. Was the fertile belt a narrow band or did it encompass all land between the North and South Saskatchewan, and possibly more?

It was not an academic question. By the 1870s, vital economic and political interests depended on the nature of Canada's North-West Territories, which then encompassed all of what would become Saskatchewan and Alberta and most of the territory later assigned to Manitoba. It was a condition of British Columbia's entry into Confederation in 1871 that a transcontinental railway be started within two years and completed within ten. Settlement of the West, too, was part of governmental nation-building strategies of the day, and settlement would naturally follow a rail line wherever it was built. What route, then, would those rails take through this still largely unknown territory? For government and business, and for the settlers who would follow, the answer had enormous consequences. Fortunes could be lost and political careers ruined if the country was different than what it was expected to be.

Fifteen years before Macoun, John Palliser led the first scientific expedition into the interior of British North America. The Irish-born sportsman and gentleman explorer, who had become enamoured of the prairies after a nearly year-long hunting expedition in the Missouri country between 1847 and 1848, proposed a journey along the unsurveyed American border to the Royal Geographic Society. The society, however, expanded the proposal to include astronomy, zoology, botany, geology, paleontology, climatology, and geography, with funding from the British government, which needed information to decide the future of Hudson's Bay Company territories.

In May 1857, Palliser left England accompanied by such experts as botanist Eugène Bourgeau, geologist and naturalist James Hector, and mathematician and astronomer John Sullivan. Travelling through the U.S., the expedition arrived at the edge of the Great Plains, a vast sea of grass, in July. Within a month they had reached the Pembina River on what is today the Manitoba–North Dakota border. Most of the grass had been eaten by grasshoppers. By September, having pressed on through the southeast corner of present-day Saskatchewan to the Qu'Appelle Valley, they reached the Regina Plains. They saw a vast emptiness as far as the eye could see. Continuing northwest to the high banks of the South Saskatchewan River near the present-day town of Outlook, they continued to note dry and empty land. After overwintering at Fort Carlton, situated in parkland among grasses and aspen, they headed west over prairie stripped bare by fires and grazing buffalo. The summer of 1858 was spent exploring the prairie edge at the Rocky Mountains. Starting from Fort Edmonton, Palliser spent 1859 travelling the western portion of the territory that came to be named for him – Palliser's Triangle, the grasslands south of the parkland region. Good pasture and fresh water they could only find in the Hand Hills east of the Red Deer River, where Drumheller is today, before ending their odyssey in July in the oasis of the Cypress Hills.

After three years observing the climate and natural vegetation of midcontinental British North America, Palliser concluded that the grasslands were unfit for cultivation or settlement. In this he was supported by Henry Youle Hind, a professor of chemistry at Toronto's Trinity College, who in 1857 and 1858 similarly travelled the North-West Territories on a scientific expedition on behalf of the Canadian government (although Hind was more optimistic about the agricultural possibilities of the parkland region). Palliser's view became the prevailing orthodoxy.

John Macoun made four more expeditions in the West, collecting plant and animal species widely and meticulously. With each trip he became more convinced that Palliser's and Hind's conclusions about the grasslands were pessimistic, and said so with great enthusiasm. However, he didn't visit the southern prairie until his third trip, in 1879, when he was assigned by the Conservative government (returned to power in 1878 after a five-year hiatus) to explore the district south of the Carlton trail between Winnipeg and Edmonton and north of the fifty-first parallel. Among his instructions was one to leave the Carlton Trail at the 102nd meridian and bear northwest for Long Lake (Last Mountain Lake), north of present-day Regina. The marker was where Palliser stated the "desert" began; the 300-kilometre distance to Long Lake was roughly parallel to one of the sides of Palliser's Triangle. Macoun was impressed with what he saw. "A most wonderful country full of flowers and copsewood and small streams," he wrote. At Long Lake he gathered cartloads of *Lycoperdon* – puffball mushrooms that thrive after heavy rains or during damp years. He ambled on, zigzagging through the grasslands of the western interior for the rest of the summer. After five months in the field he concluded that between the forty-ninth and fifty-seventh parallels at least 150 million acres of land could be put to the plough or used for raising livestock.

The next year he returned for a fourth expedition, this time taking in areas south of the Qu'Appelle and South Saskatchewan Rivers. All did not go well at first. From Moose Mountain to the Missouri Couteau to the Cypress Hills – approximately the breadth of modern Saskatchewan – he crossed dry, parched land. It was only when he found a homesteader growing an abundant crop of wheat and potatoes by the present-day Saskatchewan-Alberta border did he recover his usual optimism. In the same field were cacti and sagebrush. This 1880 expedition confirmed for him what he had concluded from his field work a year earlier: it was a matter of surface cover, not the climate, that gave the impression that the vast treeless prairie was unsuited to agriculture. In sum, he wrote: "We have ... a dry, clear, cold winter, a dry spring with bright sunshine; a warm summer with an abundance of rain. ... A dry serene autumn ... an atmosphere like this, with a soil of abounding fertility extending to a region on almost boundless extent."

In 1857 John Palliser looked over the Canadian plains and saw a desert. Through the 1870s John Macoun looked over the same landscape and saw Eden. What accounts for the difference in perception? The answer in large part

GLENBOW ARCHIVES / NA-388-1

lies with the type of weather each encountered. Macoun was lucky to be able to observe the prairies when it was experiencing the wettest decade in the nineteenth century. Palliser studied the landscape under normal-to-dry conditions. (And both extrapolated from too small a sample over too short a time.) Unknown to Macoun, continental North America in the late 1870s was experiencing particularly strong effects of El Niño, the warming of the cool Humboldt ocean current off the western coast of South America that occurs every four to twelve years. Milder, wetter weather on the prairies was the net result.

The Humboldt current was named for Alexander von Humboldt, a nineteenth-century Prussian nobleman and naturalist with a passionate interest in scientific exploration and with the money to finance it. Best known for his 1802 work on the oceanic current that bears his name, he also proposed the principle of continentality, which states that the interiors of continents have more extreme climates due to a lack of moderating influence from the ocean. Von Humboldt, a famous intellect of his day, was the first to consider nature in a geographic perspective. In his monumental 1845 work on physical geography, *Cosmos*, he outlined the relationship between climate and terrain and the range and distribution of plant and animal life. Macoun was a careful reader of *Cosmos* and it influenced his methods in the field. For instance, finding plant species thriving around Edmonton and along the Peace River that matched those growing in Ontario farming districts supported his conviction that the Canadian plains were well-suited to "the civilizing influence of the plough."

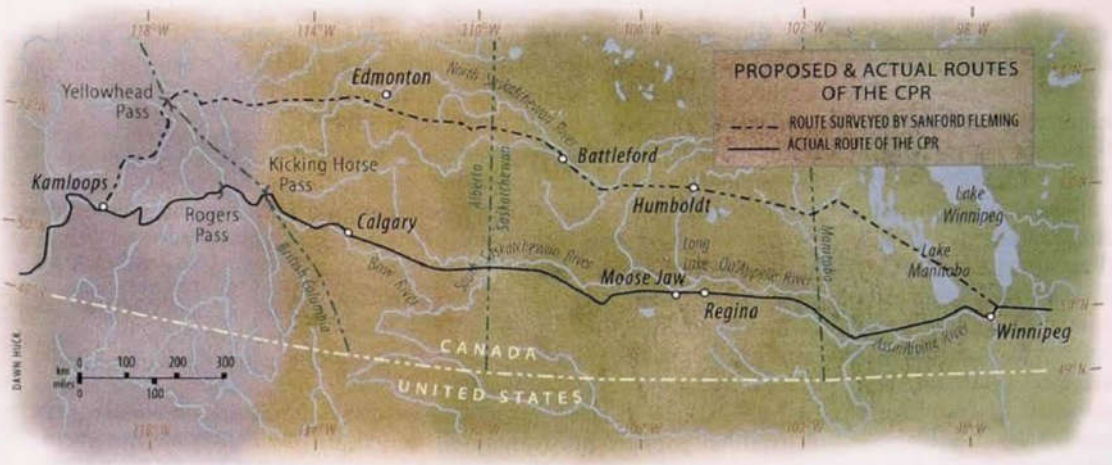
Macoun's optimistic assessment of the prairies' potential for agriculture and settlement, which virtually contradicted Palliser and Hind, dovetailed

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA / PA-12487

John Palliser (upper left, at left), sportsman and heir to an Irish landowner, explored western Canada for nearly three years, from 1857 to 1860, as the instigator and leader of the Palliser Expedition. Examining the area between Lake Superior and the Pacific coast, he and his team amassed a broad collection of data about the region's climate, geography, geology, flora and fauna, and native inhabitants. Among his conclusions was that the grasslands of the southern prairies were not suited to agriculture and settlement. Geologist and naturalist James Hector (right), was one of the team members. The reports of the Palliser Expedition were, until John Macoun's period, the main source of information about western Canada.

Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), below left, is considered one of the founders of modern geography. In South America, he analyzed the cool ocean current named for him off the coast of Peru that has proved so influential on the weather patterns of the North American plains. He also collected thousands of specimens of rocks and plants, and studied volcanoes, animal life, and the earth's magnetism. An embodiment of the Enlightenment, he was said in his lifetime to be, next to Napoleon, the most famous man in Europe. A prolific writer, his five-volume work *Cosmos* presented an all-embracing view of the universe and brought together the best scientific knowledge of his time. Humboldt, Saskatchewan is named for him.

John Macoun, at left examining a bird's nest and egg, was born in Northern Ireland and immigrated to Upper Canada at age nineteen. His interest in botany was nurtured in the fields and woods of the farm on which his parents settled. Macoun became a schoolteacher, but devoted his spare time to botany, developing a herbarium, and making contacts with other leading botanists in Canada. An anti-Darwinist, he believed that a naturalist's role was to complete an inventory of God's creation.



In the summers of 1998, 1999, and 2000, plants, birds, and butterflies that had never been seen before in the dry south of Saskatchewan were identified and collected – big bluestem grass, usually found in Manitoba where there is more rain; morel mushrooms, a gourmet favourite, found normally in forests and the damp month of May; regal fritillary, an endangered butterfly of wet meadows and moist plains; and dickcissels, a prairie grass bird not seen in numbers for more than sixty years. An El Niño cycle that began in 1997 brought more rain to southern Saskatchewan than normal. If John Macoun had ventured into the area in those years, he would likely have come to conclusions similar to the ones he recorded in his reports to Ottawa in the 1870s.

If he had ventured into southern Saskatchewan in the 1930s, however, he might have agreed with Palliser that the grasslands were an extension of the Great American Desert. Even in the 1880s, the CPR tacitly discredited Macoun's enthusiastic claims about the extent of arable land on the prairies by refusing to accept a significant portion of the land set aside for it in the seventy-seven-kilometre-wide swath along the railway route, and instead opting for substitute acreage in the Fertile Belt, the original corridor for the rails. In 1883, the dry cycle returned and lasted for a decade. Farms were abandoned and immigration declined. Ottawa, wondering about the future of the West, sent forth Macoun, now Dominion botanist with the Geological Survey of Canada, one more time. As luck would have it, he arrived just as a wet cycle returned. Through the nineties and well into the turn of the twentieth century, the prairies would fill with immigrants, and the area would turn into the breadbasket of the world. Farming techniques imported from Ontario and Europe would be modified to accommodate prairie soil and climate. New plants would be introduced that could withstand the rigours of dry land. But then would come the dustbowl of the Great Depression.

Palliser's and Macoun's observations about the climate and the land remain controversial. What will be the ultimate fate of the northern plains of North America? Climate change may play a role. So, too, may politics and economics – and sometimes they are even more fickle than the weather.

Martin J. Bailey is a self-taught naturalist living in Weyburn, Saskatchewan.

with Ottawa's own hopes for regional expansion. His findings became less the subject of dispassionate scientific debate and more the fodder of partisan politics. Some were skeptical: Alexander Mackenzie, Liberal prime minister from 1873 to 1878, judged Macoun's estimates overgenerous, and when he passed into Opposition was berated by Macoun from the visitors' gallery of the House of Commons for attacking the government on the question of prairie soil. But the new Conservative government found in Macoun the ideal man to provide the agricultural rationale for its western strategy. To attract a private builder for the Pacific railway, the government planned to offer a large western land grant, which confirmation of fertile land would serve. On the basis of Macoun's 1879 field studies, the government officially endorsed the Yellowhead route through the parklands of the northern prairies for the railway, which had been Sandford Fleming's recommendation through both Liberal and Conservative administrations. Macoun's 1880 expedition banished any lingering doubts about the value of the prairie region. When the government passed into law the railway land grant in February 1881, after reaching an agreement with a private syndicate to build the Canadian Pacific Railway, the fertile belt (25 million acres of which the CPR received) was described as "land lying between parallels 49 and 57 degrees north latitude," which incorporated all of the land Palliser had dismissed as arid.

In the spring of 1881, however, the syndicate abruptly decided to reroute the main line through the southern grasslands, the route we know today. Shortening the route was one of the reasons given. Another was eliminating competition from American-based railways who might send feeder lines into the southern prairie and siphon off business if the route ran too far north. But the impediment – that the land the rail line would pass through was almost desert – had vanished with Macoun's reports.

And thus was the mould and pattern of western Canada determined. If the route had followed Fleming's direction through the parkland region, places like Regina and Calgary would be negligible in size and importance, and hundreds of towns and villages that formed around the focus of the railway station would not exist. Settlement would have begun farther north and western Canada's larger cities would have developed there.

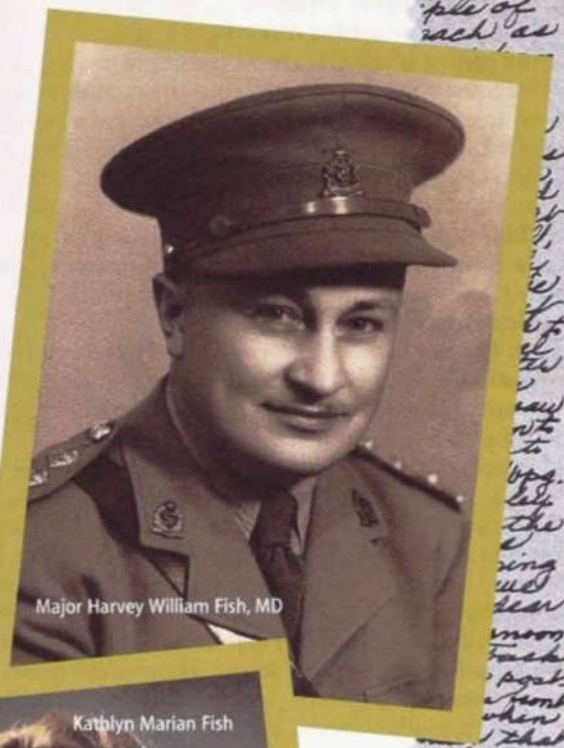
et cetera

The Palliser Expedition: The Dramatic Story of Western Canadian Exploration 1857–1860 **by Irene M. Spry. Fifth House Publishers, Calgary, 1995.**

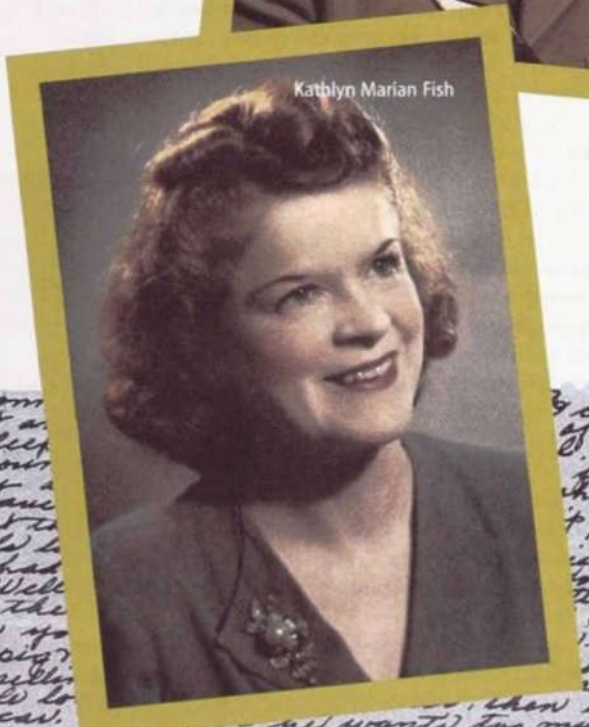
The Field Naturalist: John Macoun, The Geological Survey, and Natural Science **by W.A. Waiser. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1989.**

Kathlyn's Letters

For thousands of married women in World War II, the presiding force in life was an absence – the absence of a husband who was in uniform overseas. Left alone, these women found themselves confronting the challenges of a suddenly changed world, and of their own changed lives. As the correspondence of one young Albertan woman reveals, war on the home front, too, demanded personal sacrifice and brought suffering. But it also forged resiliency and independence.



Major Harvey William Fish, MD

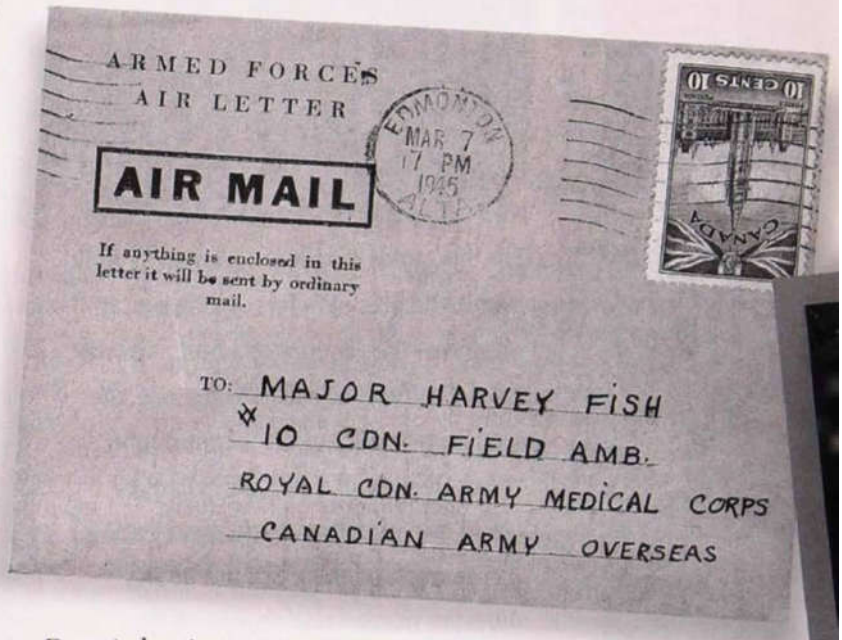


Kathlyn Marian Fish

Letters and photographs courtesy of Lynn Fish.

The children, at last, are tucked into their own beds. Now comes the precious interlude when Kathlyn Fish can gather her thoughts about the events of the last few days, pick up a pen and paper, and begin another letter to her husband Harvey:

"There was a wave of optimism in the city yesterday after the sinking of the French [Vichy] fleet.[1] Some said they'd bet the Germans would fold up by spring. Wouldn't that be lovely but we'd better keep our fingers crossed. ... We have had some beautiful moonlight nights, the glitter of all the snow making it as bright as day. I lie in bed and think and watch that Rex beer sign flash on and off. Looking at it through the frosted window pane, it looks like a Xmas tree."



Kathlyn and Susy

Dr. Harvey Fish, like thousands of other Canadian husbands, has been separated from family by daunt of war in Europe. A medical officer with the Tenth Field Ambulance, Harvey is posted to England. He will see action in France, the Netherlands, and Germany. The woman he left behind is a young mother, living in a beautiful large old home on 123rd Street in west Edmonton that has been divided into three apartments. Donnie has just started elementary school. Lynn is an infant. They are in Edmonton for the duration of the war, brought from their home in McLennan, 300 kilometres northwest of the Alberta capital. The home front is a place where young men are few, where shortages are many, where news is filtered and rumour abounds. Kathlyn is a faithful observer of her brave new life, and of a country at war. She writes Harvey every day or two. She has much to tell him:

SEPTEMBER 9, 1943

Just imagine me not knowing about Italy's surrender when I finished your letter yesterday! It happened to be the first washing and I'd thought I'd finish your letter and got interested in that and, when I noticed the time, it was after one. I didn't hear the news until I met Mrs. Woodhouse [neighbour] at the Safeway later and she asked me what I thought of it. Said she first heard the playing of the carillon in the Peace Tower of Ottawa and thought the war was over. Wish I hadn't missed the first excitement of it but it was good news when it came. Looks as if there is a lot of fighting to be done in Italy yet, in spite of the surrender.

SEPTEMBER 29, 1943

Yesterday was one of the worst days I've put in for ever so long. I was hoodooed it seems from the time I got up. First I went down to wash and got nicely underway when Donnie came down. I was rinsing and wringing some clothes when I heard him yell and here his hand was coming through the wringer. For a split sec-

[1] On November 27, 1942, the entire French fleet was scuttled at Toulon in response to the German takeover on November 11, 1942 of unoccupied France known as Vichy France. The ships were destroyed to prevent them from falling into Axis hands.

ond I couldn't move and then I hit the release. By this time his arm was through to the elbow and the skin peeled off a little underneath. Mrs. Robertson [landlord] heard the noise and came out. We took him upstairs and put his arm under the cold water tap and decided nothing was broken. I put him to bed and gave him an aspirin and, after he got through crying, he went to sleep and slept for a couple of hours. ... I was positively nauseated about the whole thing and guess after dinner

Guess being alone so many evenings gets my nerves but didn't sleep much and, when I did, I dreamed of invasion barges and planes.

Donnie was feeling a lot better than I was. Then the postman came with that short note from you written Aug. 22, in which you said you were sending something which "might be the last present you'd send me." Well, that just put the finishing touches on. I walked to the Safeway feeling about as sunk as a human being can. The girl in the Safeway said very brightly, "Aren't you happy? The cheques came today." I told her that I most certainly wasn't happy and, if my luck held, I would fall and break my neck before I got home.

SEPTEMBER 25, 1943

I am in the midst of a deal with Mrs. Woodhouse to borrow some sugar. It is unlawful now to buy or give rationed goods but I should think borrowing would be legal. I want to make up my grape jelly and, since it takes a whole month of coupons for one person to get a glass of jelly, it's definitely worthwhile. Mrs. Woodhouse just came in and we made a bargain. She gave me the sugar and, in return, I am going to do up her pears for her. I'm getting to be a confirmed bargainer – I even got my basket of grapes for 75 cents instead of 85, on account of there being a few poor ones on top. At the Bay yesterday I was shortchanged 5 cents on my meat, so went back and got it straightened out. I was saying to Mrs. B[rownridge] that a few years ago I wouldn't have thought of doing that but since I've been alone, it seems I've changed in a few ways. For one thing, I'm determined not to be gypped.

NOVEMBER 8, 1943

When I came from downtown today your letters of Oct. 27th and 29th were here. I was especially glad to get them, as put in a rather bad night last night worrying and could hardly sleep either. It was all on account of a news item on the 8 o'clock news. This was a German claim that a whole convoy of reinforcements for Italy were burned and sunk and about 14,000 men drowned. The same thing came over the 8 o'clock broadcast [the next morning] and I was really upset before I heard it again on the 11 o'clock. The action was supposed to have taken place in the Mediterranean just off the African coast and was unconfirmed by the Allies. Anyway, I thought that you could have left England and was in a real dither. Guess being alone so many evenings gets my nerves but didn't sleep much and, when I did, I dreamed of invasion barges and planes. We have heard no more of this particular piece of news and could be it's all a concoction. I think there should be a law against such reports being broadcasted when all it does is torture a lot of people.

Churchill's speech wasn't full of the optimism that some people feel. However, I think it was designed to more or less curb the wave of optimism that has been sweeping the country of late.

I've had a couple of calls lately from a couple of old wolves who want to take me "car-riding." However, I am very good at refusing and do so politely but firmly. Once you get it over to one of them that you aren't interested, they cease to bother, but they usually call up two or three times before they are convinced you mean it. You see very few decent looking men on the street these days and, when you do see one, you wonder what ailment or affliction he's suffering from.

NOVEMBER 11, 1943

Churchill's speech wasn't full of the optimism that some people feel. However, I think it was designed to more or less curb the wave of optimism that has been sweeping the country of late. I think that it's reasonable to suppose that the Germans will fight as long as the Nazi leaders can make them, for they're bound to lose anyway and don't suppose Hitler wants the day of reckoning to arrive any sooner than he can help.

Kathlyn took up painting to occupy herself in her husband's absence. Among the subjects of her watercolours

NOVEMBER 27, 1943

I stopped in for a chat with Mrs. Peterson [grocer] today and she doesn't expect to have any candy for Xmas. You can't buy a box of candy in the city. The Americans have their own store and have plenty of pineapple and juices while the rest of us have to watch them lap it up. I've heard ever so many say they'd give almost anything for some fruit juice, but they were Canadians, of course. ... Ed even had two beautiful brand new tires in the basement and Lois showed them to me. They had never been used. I told her she'd better not let anyone else know they were there for, with so many cars laid up for lack of tires, there might be a robbery.

Guess the Germans surely disproved the theory that they'd go to pieces if the war was brought to their country. The whole things seems at times like a nightmare to me. Such senseless slaughter and agony. Someone is to blame for letting it happen at all, I think. Hitler didn't spring up overnight, you know.

DECEMBER 19, 1943

Well, I went downtown to the Vendors today and I got my Xmas liquor, namely 26 oz of gin and a bottle of cheap wine. I hope I never have to [go] back there in awhile, as it was a riot from beginning to end. First you go down and take your place in the lineup, then, at intervals, about 50 or 75 people are admitted. When the officer gives the word, the ones in front leap ahead and you have to leap right after them to keep from being knocked down by the onrushing

throng in the rear. When you finally get inside, you line up and wait to give your order. I got in behind a soldier and fairly clung to the belt of his greatcoat or think I'd have been elbowed out of line long before reaching the desk. After I got my order, I pushed my way back and got in another line to pay for it, then lined up to get it. Everyone is very discourteous to everyone else and the clerks are rude to the customers. Nothing would entice me to go through such an experience except the thought of having nothing to offer by way of Xmas cheer should some of our friends call during the holiday season. Hope you are here to buy the Xmas liquor next year.

Seems the Russians are on the rampage again. There's a lot of speculation here as to whether they'll open the Western front before spring or not. I hardly think they would invade now, as the crossing would be too dangerous and the weather uncertain.

DECEMBER 23, 1943

We got the tree in last night and decorated it. … Last night I sat and looked at the tree and it looked pretty and I started thinking of all the misery on the battlefronts in the occupied countries and only felt like weeping. If it hadn't been for the children, I could have easily pulled it (the tree) to pieces. I went to bed and wondered what was coming over me. After all, we do have the privilege to enjoy a peaceful, carefree Xmas. I wouldn't spoil it for the children for anything.

were the flowers Harvey wired her from overseas.

It really seems that conditions are improving rather than deteriorating this year. I know the grocers have a lot more supplies than a year ago at this time. Even raisins are available …

DECEMBER 31, 1943

Your lovely flowers arrived last night – eight beautiful big mums. There are two mauve ones, two white ones, and four yellow ones. The stems were so long we couldn't find anything they'd stand up in and had to cut some off. It was such an unexpected thing that when the boy came to the door with them, I looked at the name to make sure they were for me. All the rest of the evening, after the flowers came, it seemed you weren't so far away. I had a little dinner party last night. We had just finished the dishes when the mums came. Everyone raved over them, sniffed them, and helped get them arranged. Dorothy says to take good care of them and we'll paint them next week.

JANUARY 6, 1944

The Russians are making marvellous progress but that doesn't remove the dread of what is yet to come. I am never optimistic anymore and try not to be morbid either. I think that a person finally learns to take it all as it comes. … Since it is Friday night, I have arranged to go to the Roxy. Betty Grable is in *Footlight Serenade*. It really seems that conditions are improving rather than deteriorating this year. I know the grocers have a lot more supplies than a year ago at this time. Even raisins are available and merchandise that had disappeared for months is reappearing.

FEBRUARY 2, 1944

I often see that Gracie Fields who worked in Birds at Grande Prairie and married the policeman. She shops at the Safeway, as they live on 124 St. somewhere. They too have a baby now and, of course, her name is Lynn. I am sure that nine out of ten baby girls is named Lynn and I am getting so fed up. Even Olga Fischer now has a Lynn. One of these days I'll give up and call ours Susan.

MARCH 29, 1944

We were quarantined yesterday for measles and Susy really has a fine dose of it. I have had very little sleep for two nights as she has been so restless and her cough so annoying. Her body is covered, even to her palms and soles of her feet but today the rash isn't as bad on her face and her eyes aren't so swollen. I keep her in a darkened room and covered well. Another really big problem is that Donnie must stay in for 16 days and he doesn't know what to do with himself and it is hard for him trying to play all alone.

Mrs. Jones arrived and said she thought she never saw me so thin and I told her no wonder, considering all my sleepless nights. She decided I needed someone around again so is moving in tomorrow night to stay with me for two or three days. Seems it's always Mrs. Jones who comes to my aid in a crisis but just to see her makes me feel better. As I was telling her tonight, all the trouble isn't overseas, as some of us who have to face responsibilities alone have our share.

Harvey in the student residence at the University of Alberta.

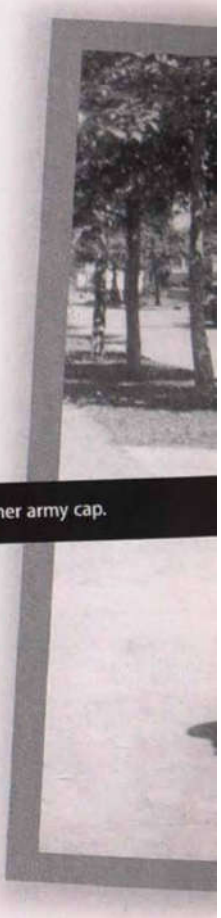
I am far from as helpless as I once thought I was. ... [I] have made the pleasant discovery I can handle almost anything on my own.

APRIL 4, 1944

I am so busy I don't quite know what to do first and, on top of it all, am always a bit tired from being up so late nights. If anyone had told me a few years ago that I'd sit up half the night for a week talking to women, I'd have said they were crazy. Maybe I am now, for I enjoy it. At least it's company.

JUNE 8, 1944

This has been such a hectic week I scarcely know how to begin. Of course the event of D-Day overshadowed everything else in importance. ... At about 7:30 the phone rang and this Mrs. Pickard told me the invasion was really on. I, in turn, called Robertsons and Mrs. Woodhouse to tell them. ... Stores closed at 11:30 to 1 P.M. and everyone went to church. The children all came home from school at 11 and there was great excitement. Most people were very sober about it and thought more of prayer than anything else.



Donnie, age eight, wearing his father's summer army cap.

JUNE 11, 1944

Your letter of May 22 arrived and you did sound rather low but no doubt you'll be feeling better now. At least the invasion provided enough excitement to suit anyone. There is no use regretting your past decisions [to join the army], as you made them without suggestions from anyone. You would have always felt you were missing life's greatest adventure. ... Besides, I am far from as helpless as I once thought I was. I depended on you for everything but have made the pleasant discovery I can handle almost anything on my own. ... I have been able to take care of everything on my present quota and dress the children better than ever before. With a given sum, I can budget my expenses and do really well. I would like to start right when you come home, as I think this war has taught us that life is very uncertain and we should live it to the very best advantage. I hope it has made better people of us too. The Allies are doing well on all fronts and maybe, if we pray hard enough, a decision will be reached before fall.

JUNE 18, 1944

Your letter of May 29th arrived and I am afraid that if General Eisenhower took time to inspect you at such a crucial time, you must be in France now. I think that I'd rather you were, because now we know you have safely landed (the part I dreaded most) and the beachhead is so well-established too. If you were still in England, you'd probably have some other landing to make which this time might not be so fortunate. Besides these rocket ships zipping over England these days make your beachhead a comparatively safe place.[2]

Well, it rained and rained practically all week but the sun has finally managed to struggle through today. It was really serious about Thursday, threatened to flood the flats and a good many families had to be evacuated. The river came up 16 feet in 48 hours and the water coming out of the taps is so muddy we have to boil our drinking water. Our telephone was off for almost a day but so were a lot of others in the city.

After my week of being cooped up I got something in the nature of a break on Friday. Gladys Meldrum had been working at the Armories canteen in the morning and there were a couple men from Ottawa going through to Wainwright the next day. They wanted Gladys to get them a couple of girls to go to a show and eat after that evening. Gladys suggested that she could get a couple of 19 year old girls she knew but they said "nothing doing." They wanted older girls who had to be: 1. respectable 2. intelligent enough to carry on an interesting conversation. So Gladys called me up and asked if I'd play hostess with her and said she could assure me they were extra respectable. Gladys and I went together (I got Shirley to stay with the children) and met them downtown. Her partner was a big fat staff sergeant about 40 and mine was a young Lieutenant. They knew we were both married and they were only told our first names. We went to see Bing Crosby in *Dixie* and I never saw two people enjoy a show more. The fat one mopped his eyes, he laughed so hard. After the show we went in to eat and Gladys and I tried to turn on the intelligent conversation they desired. Well, we talked about the CCF, Mackenzie King, the draft set-up, rockets over England and how they were controlled, and really not a frivolous thing. They treated us with the utmost deference and I'm surprised to discover that I am capable of enjoying an evening without even one drink. They offered to get us a taxi but Gladys and I took the streetcar about midnight and came home. They thanked us for a perfectly grand evening. I can say now I did play hostess once and very successfully.

JULY 10, 1944

I had quite a talk with Mrs. Brownridge and Robert is in France now. He had quite a landing. Said he had no right to be alive, as six boys right in front of him were killed on the beach. He said he crawled for a long distance and was sniped at every inch of the way but they didn't touch him. He is with a "creeping barrage"—whatever that is. You'd likely know.

Yesterday afternoon Donnie came dashing in and put on that summer army cap of yours, which is miles too large for him and went out. Well, suppertime came and no Donnie and a Mr. Williams from down the street said their little boy was with him and they were getting anxious too. It was nearly seven before they turned up and did Donnie ever have a dirty face. It turned out that a car with a loudspeaker was going up and down the street inviting all children of servicemen to come to Government House grounds. I suppose Donnie wanted proof, so hence the army cap.

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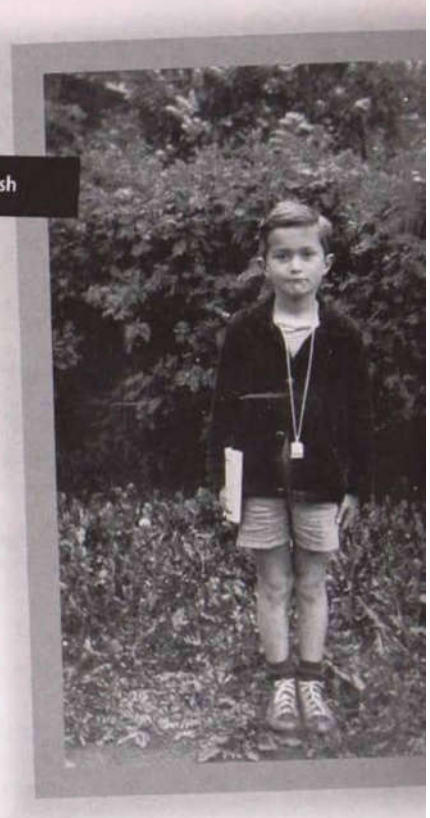
[2] On June 6, 1944, the Allied forces launched from England the invasion of northern France—the famous D-Day of World War II—establishing permanent positions along the beaches of the Norman coast that permitted further penetration of Europe. Meanwhile, England was suffering under a rain of German V-1 rockets, guided ballistic missiles, which were then revolutionary, followed in September 1944 by the more sophisticated V-2.

Of course, they went up to the grounds and the Americans were treating them. Donnie said he and Arthur (his dad isn't in the service) could scarcely move, they were so full. Donnie said he had all the watermelon, ice-cream, pop and stuff he could hold. I never saw a dirtier face. I gave him a talking to for not letting me know where he was going and for staying away for so long.

The casualties are heavy these days as every night now the *Bulletin* has a solid page and sometimes more.



Donnie Fish

SEPTEMBER 10, 1944

It was nice to get the tomatoes dumped in your jeep. I suppose the French people are so grateful to have their country back, they'll give the soldiers anything they can spare. Saskatchewan has passed a law saying that all beverage rooms in the province are to be closed on V-E Day. Isn't that a rotten trick? I think people are entitled to celebrate in any way they see fit. Don't you? Hope the day comes very soon.

SEPTEMBER 17, 1944

It is still rainy and cold today. Mrs. V. and the two children arrived about 3 P.M. yesterday afternoon and the visit was much what I expected it would be. The children were little angels, aside from keeping us continually on the jump and a few mischievous pranks, like taking a bite out of each of my nice Picardy buns and throwing them all over the floor, under the beds, etc., pulling all the blooms off my precious African violet, throwing everything out of your desk drawer, writing on the furniture and, last, but not least, when Donnie came into the living room, Jimmy was walking on the piano keys. We did have a nice supper, between keeping the tablecloth on the table and the food off the floor. Mrs. V. said she really enjoyed it. I was sure the buffet doors would be smashed, as they both insisted on slamming them and banging them with anything handy. Well, there's such a thing as not letting it happen to me again.

NOVEMBER 8, 1944

I just got back from taking my music lessons and seems it is the first free minute I've had today to get at this letter. I had my hat on all ready to start out for my lesson at about 1:30 when Mrs. B. came in weeping to tell me Robert is missing. I felt just awfully sorry for her because you know how she adores Robert. Major B. was up for two days but she says he was of little help as he always does have the pessimistic viewpoint and feels that Robert is done for. Still, he does feel terribly badly just the same. As far as they can find out, Robert was taking his gun up very close behind enemy lines and wasn't heard of again. I told Mrs. B. that if he were killed, they'd surely find him and he disappeared so completely it must be that he was taken prisoner. I hope so anyway. It makes one wonder what day our turn is coming. I promised to pray for Robert's safety and guess that's all I can do. ... A life may not seem of great value over there but it means a great deal to the folks at home. This has been a terrible week for me as I've just been feeling so sorry for people that I am all upset.

Members of the Tenth Canadian Field Ambulance,

DECEMBER 28, 1944

Mrs. B. called up this afternoon and said on Dec. 23rd, they received a telegram from Ottawa saying Robert was officially a prisoner in a transient camp in Germany. This made their Xmas much happier. She said that Major B. arrived home the night the telegram came and he sat up all night drinking and you could tell he was so relieved. Of course, Elsie was very happy as there was always a doubt until they got the good news.

We were talking about some of the returned men being changed in one way or another the other night and I wondered if you'd be.

JANUARY 28, 1945

It is Sunday again and a very beautiful one as the trees are heavy with frost. We watched the sunrise and it was really lovely, as the frost on the trees turned first pink and then to gold. It is colder, of course, but we haven't had much real cold weather so far this winter.

Helen G. says her husband is quite changed – more fussy and complaining. We were talking about some of the returned men being changed in one way or another the other night and I wondered if you'd be. Lois said, "Well, Kitty, you've changed a lot yourself since Harvey left." I don't really know in what way unless it is that I am more self-sufficient and confident. I used to rather imagine that people liked me because of you. ... Anyway, it does a lot for a person to be on their own, even if in other ways it isn't pleasant. Besides, I've developed new interests like music and painting and I hope I never again make mere housekeeping my sole purpose in life. Not that I intend to shirk the housekeeping but can, I hope, sandwich in a few other things.

FEBRUARY 4, 1945

Yesterday the postman knocked and said, "Letters from that man again!" and gave me your letters of Jan. 21st and 25th. He always seems so pleased when he can dig up a letter from you and, of course, I was surprised as I didn't expect more letters so soon. Well, dear, my heart did at least three handsprings when I read that part about you being hurt. Before I properly got the gist of it, I did get a little scare but feel quite thankful it was only a small hurt. If you hadn't let me know and I had received a telegram, it wouldn't have been so good. I told Donnie and Susy and Donnie got on his coat right away to go spread the news. However, I thought I'd detain him for the time being, as didn't want him exaggerating and having the neighbours phoning. Still, I think he'll no doubt make the most of it in telling the boys.

The [war] news still sounds encouraging but strangely enough there is no optimism among the people as there was last fall and think we have far more reason to feel optimistic than we did back then. Everyone seems to be waiting with bated breath to see what is really going to happen. Guess we're slowly learning that we can't judge this one by the 1918 standard.

Royal Canadian Medical Corps, Labour Day, Dieppe, 1944. Harvey, kneeling second from left.

FEBRUARY 15, 1945

I was rather amused at Mrs. M.'s sister, who, by the way, is a sort of crude creature. She said, "Take it from me, if you don't get a boyfriend and enjoy yourself, you're crazy." I know, much to my disgust, that a lot of women take that view of it, but I always say, that if the war lasted fifty years, I would stick to my way of doing things. It seems that people like Mrs. M.'s sister cannot possibly understand that there are so many fine things in this world to occupy one's time. I know that I could live a whole lifetime and keep doing the very things I am doing today – first, trying to be both parents at once to the children, studying music, art, and redecorating the house, besides replenishing my wardrobe in the event of your not too far distant arrival home – I hope.

FEBRUARY 22, 1945

Before I finish though I must tell you how I got gypped. ... The other night a man came to the back door and said his truck broke down and he had a lot of chickens he had to sell and was really sacrificing them at $1 each. I made the mistake of giving him the dollar and then he handed me a chicken and

I can't see how people can dance, sing, and yell [on V-E Day] but perhaps it is me that is queer, for all I still feel like doing is thanking God gratefully for this day.

beat it before I could say a thing. You should have seen the mangy looking chicken! There weren't two ounces of meat on its bones and I mean bones! This same man has been to various places recently and always after dark and always with the story of his truck breaking down. I just hope he never dares to come back here.

MARCH 10, 1945

I felt sorry for B[ernice] one night when she called up. She said that when H. went away she had an idea that somehow time would stand still but she said that looking at the babies growing into such big children and looking at herself in the mirror very critically, she knew she was mistaken and years were years after all. George B. said the other day that being away and coming back like this, he thinks the wives left at home with the children have by far the worst end of the deal. "Hell," he said, "when we're not on duty, we're free to do as we please, but you girls can't do anything and besides are tied down with the kids." I told George that it was decent of him to see our side of it because a lot of you don't look at it that way.

Lynn (Susy) Fish, age three, and Donnie Fish.

MARCH 21, 1943

The first day of spring! And spring really seems to have come to Edmonton for a time at least. The snow is going fast and the lawn looks green along one side. ... Yesterday the postman brought forms to fill out for the family allowance. I got it all filled out last night. Seems we are to receive $8 per month for each of ours until they are sixteen years old. I heartily disapprove of this government measure because, while a very few may honestly spend it on their children, about 50% will spend on liquor or other luxuries. ... I think this will tend to encourage shiftlessness in already none too ambitious characters. Mrs. W. says the idea is to build up the birth rate and nothing else. Whatever it is for, I can't say we want it or need it for our children but, apparently, we are going to get it so we can decide if it is to go into a savings account for their education or what. The way the government is "giving out" lately looks as if they intend to take charge of our needs and we won't have to worry. Guess a lot of countries over there haven't the same complaint. Only wish, honey, you'd hurry and get back to this "land of plenty."

APRIL 13, 1945

You may be sure we have had very heavy hearts here since hearing the news of President Roosevelt's death. Yesterday we just couldn't believe it but today it seems as if it must have really happened. All flags are at half-mast and the downtown stores have memorials in their windows. ... I was feeling better yesterday until the news of the president's death came over the radio. Ever since that they have been playing classical music, hymns, broken only by reports and talks about Roosevelt. Seems one goes around with a lump in the throat all the time. ... I guess we just took it for granted that he was a wonderful man but didn't realize how much we depended on him to make everything right in this awful mix-up. I haven't nearly so much confidence in Churchill and Stalin is more-or-less an enigma.

APRIL 17, 1945

I hope you are not too near where the Germans have flooded northern Holland. I can't see why they don't give up when they know they are beaten. Of course, the Nazis are apparently willing to sacrifice the last soldier and civilian to

save their hides just a few weeks longer. Seems a pity so many lives have to be sacrificed to shield the Hitler gang when it is just a matter of a short time until they'll have to give up anyway. Anyway, I hope you are all right and get through it safely.

APRIL 22, 1945

The Russians are in Berlin today and the American armies may join within a few hours. I am wondering if the forthcoming announcement when they do will proclaim a V-E Day. Donnie asked me yesterday if he might stay home on V-E Day. I asked him what he intended to do at home and he said, "I was kind of thinking I might drink a can of apple juice and a bottle of beer." I told him if he did that, he might have no choice about staying home. We hear of the terrible atrocities that have been committed by the Nazis and the awful discoveries being made at the captured concentration camps. I hope sincerely that those responsible are made to suffer in like manner and that the allies have no mercy towards them. Even devils in hell could not perpetrate more infernal crimes. It is hard to believe they are even human. I have an idea that the Russians might be able to deal with them quite effectively.

MAY 8, 1945

Well, it is all over at last and I still can't believe it. I tried to get a chance to write to you yesterday but couldn't seem to settle down to anything. Besides, your letters with the new address arrived at 3 P.M. so was glad I waited until I felt more rational. I got up at 8 o'clock as usual yesterday. My cold had settled in my chest simply because I had spent all Sunday steaming and trying to get rid of it. Anyway, I felt quite miserable. Donnie turned on the radio and we heard "The Victory Polka" and "Roll Out the Barrel" and then some reference to a holiday. Donnie said, "I'll bet this is V-E Day," but I just couldn't believe it. Anyway, when we found out it was really so, don't know how to describe my feelings. First, I felt deeply thankful and then dashed out to the kitchen to weep a little and say a prayer. I can't see how people can dance, sing, and yell but perhaps it is me that is queer, for all I still feel like doing is thanking God gratefully for this day. Then there are too many homes on this street like Dr. Hope's, Reids, and Lones where there isn't much to rejoice over. Nan phoned quite early and she was crying and sobbing so she could hardly tell me who it was. ... Of course, Bernice and I began to wonder right away when we could expect you all home.

Later on, we all got in Butler's car, Mr. and Mrs. B., Billy, Donnie and Susy, with flags in every hand. We got into the downtown celebration and I never saw such a jam. Cars were bumper to bumper about three deep and every horn blowing. There were trucks so full of boys and girls they were simply overflowing and everyone waving flags and yelling. Those who had no cars walked and there were several "Hitlers" being dragged around. One fellow sat on top of a car beating two garbage can lids together and the garbage cans tied behind made quite a clatter. The stores were almost hidden with flags and did the children ever enjoy it. Mr. Butler said, "How I love this. Last war I was in the trenches in France and missed it all." Anyway, we went up and down Jasper about three times. ... Well, honey, I can yet hardly believe this nightmare is over and that you will soon really be coming home. Bernice and I were saying what a feeling of great pride it gives us to think we have husbands who have done their share to bring about this glorious victory and that perhaps we have helped a little too.

After the war, the Fish family returned to McLennan, where Harvey resumed his medical practice. Kathlyn would pursue her interest in painting and the arts, but her life was cut short. She died suddenly in 1956 from a cerebral hemorrhage. Their son, Don, became a pilot with the RCAF. He is now retired, living in McLennan. Lynn (a.k.a. Susy), who preserved her mother's correspondence, is a retired high school English teacher living with her husband in Red Deer. Four years after Kathlyn's death, Harvey remarried. He died in 1978.

et cetera

Back the Attack! Canadian Women During the Second World War – at Home and Abroad by Jean Bruce. Macmillan of Canada, Toronto, 1985.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA / PA-172135

by Ted Ferguson

She was hired in 1889 to write the women's page for the *Toronto Mail*. But Kit Coleman rebelled against her editors' notions that women's interests were confined to hearth and home. Restless, adventurous, talented, she sought a wider world for her readers. But no door opened automatically. When she petitioned to become a war correspondent, she was told the battlefield was

no proper place for a *wo*man.

She wasn't deterred.

For six weeks during the summer of 1898, Toronto journalist Kathleen (Kit) Coleman languished in a grubby Florida hotel, frustrated and angry. She had persuaded the American Secretary of War, Russell Alger, to let her become the world's first accredited female war correspondent, but military officers in Tampa refused to allow her to board any of the troop ships heading to Cuba where the Spanish-American conflict was taking place. A battle area, the officers insisted, was not a proper place for a woman.

Many male journalists agreed with them. Writing in the London *Daily Mail*, an incensed Charles H. Hand huffed, "What kind of a newspaper proprietor was it, who would send a tender-nurtured lady around amidst the hardships, the bullets, the yellow fever germs of a Cuban war?"

When a special press boat departed for the troubled island, the army commander, Brigadier-General William B. Shafter, personally

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA / PA-028071

From left: ■ Kit Coleman was born at Castleblakeney, a village in Galway, in the west of Ireland. The daughter of a middle-class farmer, she was educated in languages and the classics and completed her education at a Belgian finishing school. At twenty she entered into an arranged marriage with a wealthy but elderly Irish landowner. The union produced one child, who died in early childhood. Not long after, her husband died. Disinherited by his family, she left Ireland, first for London, then for Canada. Her second marriage, around

ordered the captain to leave Kit behind. She was disappointed but far from defeated. "I'm going through to Cuba," she wrote in her Toronto *Mail and Empire* column, "and not all of the old generals in the old army are going to stop me."

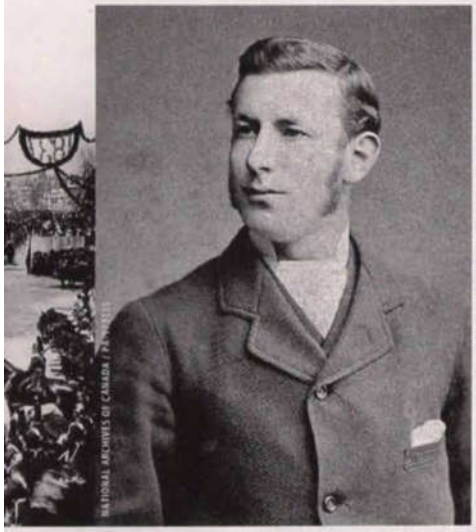
They didn't.

Kit's descriptions of the war in Cuba fascinated her readers, as did almost everything else the pioneering journalist wrote. When her weekly column appeared, often covering an entire page, people lined up outside the *Mail*'s downtown building to buy hot-off-the-press copies. For twenty-two years, between 1889 and 1911, Woman's Kingdom was an engaging, unpredictable stew, sometimes funny, sometimes poignant, occasionally just plain cantankerous. In the Victorian era, when females weren't supposed to openly discuss affairs of the heart, Kit created Canada's first lovelorn-advice column. She travelled broadly, covering, among other major events, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee festivities, the Chicago World Columbian Exposition, and the New York trial in which millionaire Harry Thaw was accused of murdering renowned architect Stanford White. She interviewed newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst and actresses Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse, and Lillie Langtry. She scooped reporters from across the continent by talking to infamous swindler Cassie Chadwick in a Cleveland jail cell. Quitting the *Mail and Empire* in 1911 over a salary dispute, Kit blazed another trail, freelancing her column to newspapers throughout the country and becoming Canada's first syndicated writer.

For all of her journalistic success, Kit was a warm, down-to-earth person, well liked by her fellow employees. She worked hard on her writing, but she paid little attention to her personal appearance. She wore frumpy clothing and didn't seem to notice the ink stains on her hands. She usually kept her curly, red hair shortish or in an upsweep because it was less trouble to manage. Her lack of fashion sense upset at least one reader. After she and her husband spotted Kit at a local horse show, the reader sent her a letter.

> *Here is what we saw: a tall, gaunt, passé woman, nearer to fifty than forty, gowned shabbily in an old black silk that smelled of ammonia (we passed close to you, Madam), and wearing a hat – a dusty, old chip hat, laden with ancient feathers that matched your air of shabby gentility. ... Here you are with your "clever" criticisms of people whose shoes you would not be permitted to blacken.*

Ironically, fashion was one of the "femininities" that Christopher Bunting, *Mail* managing editor, wanted the thirty-three-year-old widow to specialize in when he originally hired her. The *Mail* (it later merged with the *Empire*) was losing money and, coming across a freelance article about Parisian bohemians she penned for *Saturday Night* magazine, he thought she might be able to lure more female readers. Kit did what Bunting requested, but her comments on fashion were often humorously irreverent. "Don't wear too many diamonds," she advised. "They make eyes and teeth dull by comparison." And referring to the vogue for veiled hats, she said, "Veils would be more valuable to some



"KIT" HAS SAILED FOR SANTIAGO.

Left Key West Yesterday on the Red Cross Steamer Lampasas For the Battleground.

WAS BOUND TO GO THERE, AND HAS.

1884, to a Toronto salesman, was likewise short-lived, though it produced two children. However, her third marriage, to a Hamilton physician, shortly after her return from Cuba in 1898, endured until her death in 1915. Though born Catherine Ferguson, she underwent a few name changes in her life, not all of them related to marriage. Before her first marriage she had changed her name to Kathleen, though the reason is not known. Around the time she separated from her second husband she adopted the middle name Blake, which was the name of an eminent Galway family. Along the way, she also shaved a few years off her age. She claimed to have been born in 1864, which was repeated in her obituary, but Irish records place the date eight years earlier. ■ Among the world events Coleman covered for her newspaper column was Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. Given a paltry expense account, she was obliged to rent a cheap room in an East End boardinghouse. Learning she was in town, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier invited her to accompany him to Buckingham Palace to watch colonial troops receive medals from the Prince of Wales. Coleman wrote that she found herself less entertained by the medal presentation than by the look on the East Enders' faces when she stepped from her shabby lodgings into the resplendent royal carriage supplied to the prime minister. ■ Kit's second husband Edward Watkins. ■ Kit with her third husband, Dr. Theobald Coleman. Their marriage took them to Sudbury and then to Hamilton, but Kit continued to produce her column for the Toronto-based *Mail and Empire*.

ladies if, in covering their faces, they closed their mouths too." Kit gradually widened her scope, rendering her views on politics, the arts, and whatever else intrigued her. Aware that Woman's Kingdom attracted a large number of male fans, Kit asked, "Why do men look ashamed if they are caught reading the woman's page in a newspaper? Are women utter idiots? Do men believe there is not a word to be written for our sex beyond frills and fopperies?" The readers loved remarks like that, and Bunting, his eye on the sales figures, gave her free rein.

Apart from the *Saturday Night* story, Kit had no previous experience in journalism. Born Catherine Ferguson in 1856 in western Ireland, she was twenty when she married affluent landowner Thomas Willis, who was fifty-six. He died four years after they wed. The family fortune inherited from his father reverted to his widowed sister, not his wife. Kit sold some household furniture and accumulated enough cash to travel first to London, then, in 1884, to emigrate to Canada. She got a secretarial job in Toronto and married her boss, Edward Watkins. They had two children together. Then Watkins died of a heart attack. To support herself, Kit entered the newspaper business, a profession where female reporters were considered lowly misfits. (Her third marriage, in 1898, to Dr. Theobald Coleman, was not a joyous union, but Kit remained with the Hamilton physician until her death in 1915.) Having had her own share of heartbreak, Kit felt she was a natural to give other people romantic pointers. The reading public obviously agreed, for lovelorn letters arrived at her desk by the sackful. Some of Kit's printed replies were extremely serious and some were decidedly tongue-in-cheek. Either way, they were all wonderfully entertaining.

> *Ann: It was not pleasant for you to know that your private affairs were the topic of an afternoon tea gossip. Take heart, for your life, as you describe it, is so dull that the gossipers must have had a boring time.*
>
> *Maria asks me to tell her "what it signifies when a gentleman gets a lady's handkerchief and keeps it." It probably means, Maria, that he has a headcold.*

Scolding an attention-seeking housewife, Kit wrote:

> *How can your husband sanely attend to his business if you are always hanging on his shoulder when he comes home, tearful and red-nosed, telling him he doesn't love you anymore? You are so stupid. Imagine tearing up a plant every few days to look at the roots to see if it is growing!*

Kit advocated chastity before marriage and fidelity afterwards. A reader calling herself Hot-Blooded Cheat sent numerous letters complaining about her unhappy extramarital activities. Sick and tired of hearing from the woman, Kit wrote, "Your nauseating immorality and endless whining appall me. Please find someone else to listen to you. A priest, your mother, a deaf male, anyone but me." Weeks later, receiving yet another account of a failed love affair, Kit advised Hot-Blooded Cheat to subdue her sexual passion by going on rigorous bicycle rides.

Kit didn't suggest energetic bike-peddling sessions to quell William Randolph Hearst's obsessive money-making urges, but she did portray him in an unfavorable light. She travelled to San Francisco in 1895 to interview the newspaper baron. "A great demagogue like Mr. Hearst is neither an honest nor a great journalist," she wrote, attacking his penchant for yellow journalism. "He is dangerous because he is inciting the poor against those who are a little better off." Describing Hearst's demeanor, she said, "He is spoken of as a shy, timid man. There is a form of shyness and timidity behind which lurk cruel and terrible characteristics ... he will chat freely, even gaily, with the man whom he will knife in the back."

Kit's opinion of Harry Thaw was even more scathing. Covering the millionaire's murder trial in 1907, she said he was "a big man with an extremely ugly and exceedingly unintelligent face. His head is badly shaped, eyes protruding, mouth high, and lips set over yellow teeth ... he suggests the degenerate." Referring to Thaw's actress–chorus-girl wife, whose affair with Madison Square Garden architect Stanford White led to the fatal shooting, Kit penned, "Evelyn Nesbit, you felt, has never known any deep emotion. She ran through the filth of life, grasping the money thrown to her with both hands. Her character appeared to be of a thickness of a sheet of notepaper."

Evelyn Nesbit notwithstanding, Kit generally had a soft spot for actresses. British star Lillie Langtry was among the performers she found to be agreeable:

> *Many actresses not quite as famous or as beautiful will receive a newspaperwoman with an air of condescension, with a brusqueness of manner, or with silly affectation. Mrs. Langtry indulges in none of those mannerisms. She is simple, direct, helpful and dignified.*

Following a talk with Italian actress Eleonora Duse, Kit declared, "You read nothing of the real story [of her life] in that lean form, that melancholy face, that gentle, queenly bearing. Glitterings you have, hints of much suffering born nobly, of a past that has been intensely sad, but which has left no bitterness, no hardness of the soul." Interviewing Sarah Bernhardt in Montreal in 1898, she learned the secret of how the French celebrity made her eyes seem

■ Coleman interviewed actress Sarah Bernhardt (right) in Montreal in 1898. The French star had a knack for upsetting convention – sleeping in a padded coffin, keeping a pet python, witnessing public executions, playing males roles such as Hamlet – none of which endeared her to society's more conservative elements. The archbishop of Montreal likened her to the Whore of Babylon and counselled Quebec Catholics to boycott her performance. The archbishop was ignored, and Coleman was captivated by the Frenchwoman, in part because with their red hair and gamin features they bore a resemblance to one another.

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large, black, and languorously beautiful: before going on stage, she dilated the pupils by putting a drop of belladonna in each eye.

Cassie Chadwick also received a sympathetic treatment from Kit. Claiming to be Andrew Carnegie's illegitimate daughter, the Ontario-born swindler defrauded wealthy Americans and banks out of $2 million before she was arrested in 1905. Kit joined a group of reporters granted a brief question-and-answer session with Cassie in the Cleveland jail. Deliberately leaving her gloves in the cell, Kit returned to retrieve them and gained an exclusive, one-on-one interview in which she depicted Cassie as a loving mother who gave a lot of the stolen money to charity.

Getting into Cassie Chadwick's jail cell alone was actually easier for Kit than obtaining permission to cover Cuba during the Spanish-American hostilities. Soon after President William McKinley and the United States Congress declared war on Spain, Kit journeyed to Washington and implored Secretary of War Alger to sign a document stating she was an official correspondent. He balked. Women didn't belong in war zones, he said, because soldiers moved around their encampments bare-chested. Kit went back to Alger's office repeatedly. He eventually gave in and signed the paper making her the only accredited female writer among 134 male reporters. (Two American journalists, Anna Benjamin and Katherine Turnbull, also wound up in Cuba. Benjamin entered the country as a Red Cross nurse; Turnbull arrived there on a coal collier. Unaccredited, they were not allowed to travel with the troops, as Kit was, and consequently their stories were sporadic and shallow.)

After six weeks in the humid, insect-infested Tampa hotel, Kit finally sailed to the island on a government freighter carrying war supplies. She travelled by foot and on mule, ate with soldiers and Cuban peasants, and slept on the ground and in buildings commandeered by the American army. She wrote affectionately of the bar of soap she kept in her kit bag, which she brought out when bathing in rivers and creeks and at rural wells. The *Mail and Empire* published her stories on the front page, under headlines such as KIT FOLLOWS THE COURSE OF THE ESCAPING SPANIARDS and HOW KIT, MOUNTED ON A MULE OF HIGH DEGREE, INSPECTED THE TROOPS.

Her stories were provocative gems. Visiting a field hospital, Kit said the wounded Spanish soldiers were "living ghosts of men" whose eyes were "sunken far in their sockets burning like lamps on the edge of extinction." Describing the aftermath of a major battle in eastern Cuba, Kit wrote, "Here in Santiago, men, nobles and commoners alike, dying in filth and stench, and uttermost squalor; lying out there in the hills for the buzzard and crab to feed upon. There is heartbreak in the thought of it; in the sight of all of this hopeless suffering. We are all very little creatures. Very small and cheap and poor."

In another story, she pictured Santiago as

> *a city of mean streets. A city spread out on the edge of a foul harbor, lying in the lap of grey-green hills, beautiful at first glance, horrible in its squalor and stench when you come close to it. A city four hundred years old, inexpressibly quaint, expressibly filthy. ... Ragged Cubans, black and white, swarmed everywhere. Naked children ran about dodging the flying feet of horses that clattered along the cobblestones. ... The bottle-necked harbor filled with sunken ships, through which you creep to the city, has something too with the feeling of utter dejection that seizes you. It is as if you are cut off from everything that is fresh, sweet and wholesome. You feel as if in some weird dream you have drifted into a city in fairyland, but a fairyland in which dwell disordered and dilapidated fairies. The place looks utterly hopeless."*

Kit spent a month on the island. When she sailed back to Florida aboard a troopship carrying wounded soldiers, she received a message from the secretary of war. He wanted her to go on a cross-country lecture tour, relating her experiences as the world's first female war correspondent. Kit turned him down. "If I tell the women of the United States the awful things I have seen," she said in a manner that would have been very familiar to her devoted readers, "you will have riots on your hands."

With her combative spirit, Kit, readers assumed, was an invulnerable force. That assumption ended abruptly in May 1915. Coming down with a bad cold, she crawled into bed, planning to drink tea and write her column on notepaper. The cold turned into pneumonia and, at fifty-nine, Kit Coleman died, leaving a brightly lit path for generations of female journalists to follow. ◘

"KIT" REACHES CUBA'S SHORES.

Describes the Voyage, Undertaken After So Many Difficulties Had Been Surmounted.

HER EXPERIENCES ON A WARSHIP

Ted Ferguson is a Toronto-based author and journalist. He has published six books, including three dealing with Canadian historical subjects. He is currently working on a book about his homesteading years in the northern Alberta bush.

et cetera

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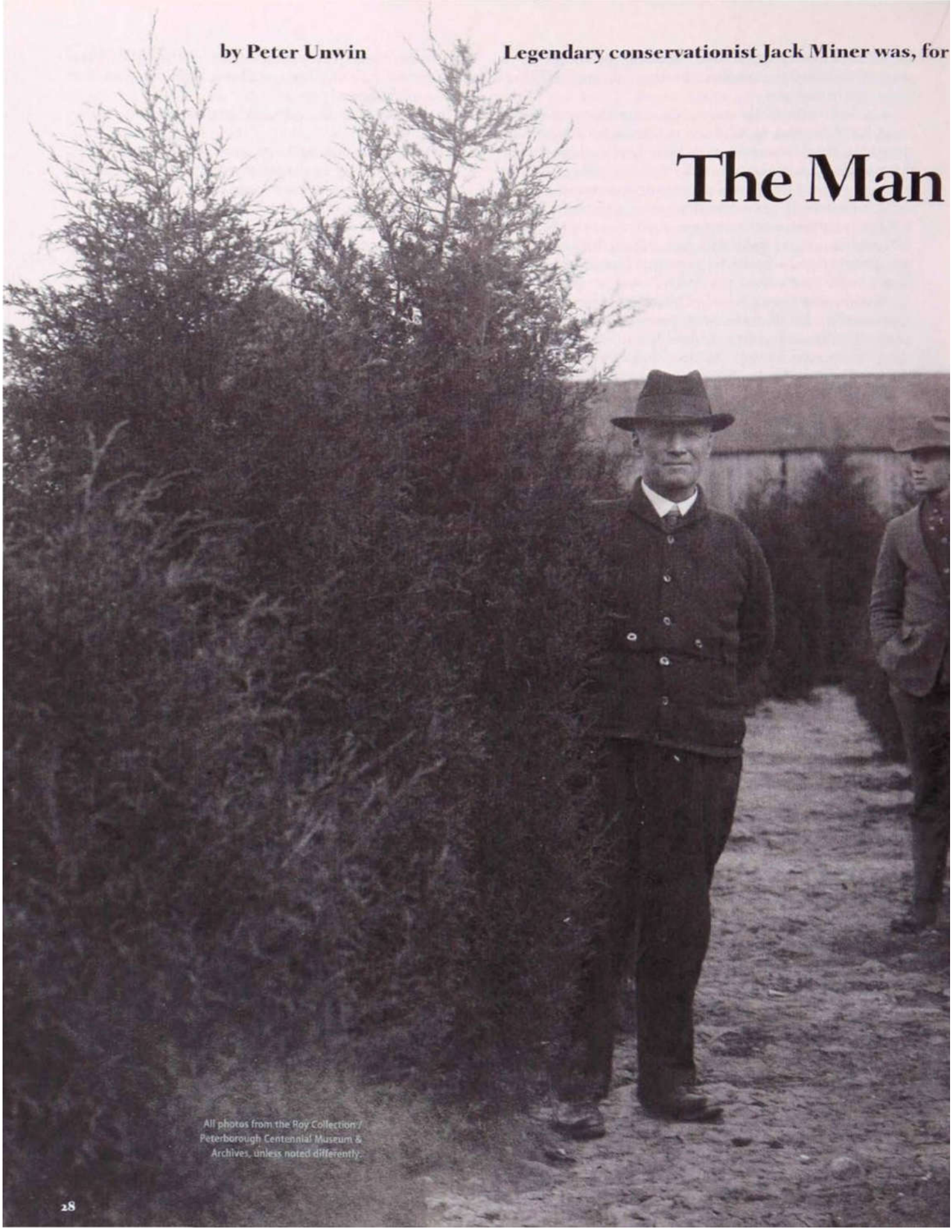
by Peter Unwin

Legendary conservationist Jack Miner was, for

The Man



All photos from the Roy Collection / Peterborough Centennial Museum & Archives, unless noted differently.

Who Would Have Dominion

In the first half of the twentieth century, he was ranked alongside William Shakespeare as one of the fifteen "greatest personages the world has ever known." *Maclean's* magazine placed him, more conservatively, as the fifth among the greatest living Canadians. The mayor of Detroit called him the "world's greatest naturalist." A Toronto professor compared him to Aristotle and found Aristotle wanting. In 1926 *Collier's* noted a distinct similarity to Francis of Assisi. His publishers insist he was the driving force behind the United Nations. To the rest of the English-speaking world he was simply "Wild Goose Jack, the father of conservation."

In his newspaper columns, films, lectures, radio broadcasts, and books, he made himself known to millions. His story became mythical—an unschooled, illiterate, barefoot American boy learns his wisdom in the Canadian forest, feeds his family on the strength of his hunting, gives up hunting to rescue the Canadian goose from extinction, becomes the first conservationist, the first man to band birds, the first to establish a bird sanctuary—a man who changed not only the world's attitude toward nature, but nature itself. It is a story that two generations of school children were raised on, told so many times that for half a century it carried the unassailable truth of a folk tale.

In the aftermath of the deaths of his brother and his first two children, and with an awakened interest in the Bible, Miner began to divert his enthusiasm from hunting, at which he was skilled, toward conservation. In 1904, using decoys and flooding one of his brickyard pits, he tried to attract geese to his property. Fours years later, eleven Canada geese landed on his pond, and the Jack Miner Bird Sanctuary was effectively born. The next year, applying a technique learned from Ontario ornithologist Percy Taverner to study bird distribution, Miner banded a bird for the first time, using a piece of aluminum and scratching his postal address on it with the blade of a pair of scissors. Six weeks after the bird was released, Miner received a letter from a South Carolina hunter who had shot the duck. By marking on a map the locations of the hunters who acknowledged shooting one of his banded birds, he was able to track the migratory flight paths of waterfowl. The information was later used to support the 1916 Migratory Bird Treaty between Canada and the U.S., which placed the first restrictions on hunting to assure protection of waterfowl populations.

His name was Jack Miner, born the fifth of ten children in 1865, at the hamlet of Dover Center, Ohio. At the age of thirteen his family uprooted itself and relocated in Essex County, Ontario, on the north shore of Lake Erie, southeast of Detroit. A failed brick-making business is often given as the reason for the move, although the Miner family may have been attempting to put distance between Jack's father and his access to American liquor. Jack Miner would later suggest it was cheap land in the Kingsville area that precipitated the move – land owned by former American slaves who had travelled north on the perilous Underground Railway – "our darkies," Jack called them.

His youth, to the extent that it can be pieced together from his books, was spent schooling himself in the ways of the animals and the woods of southern Ontario. "I have never seen a human being possess better eyesight and hearing than I did, or one who could slip through the woods more noiselessly than I could," he boasted. According to Jack, he and his brother Ted were soon the delight of Essex County. Men came from miles to hear them sing. Men came from miles to watch them hunt. Jack is fond of letting his readers know that he was not a handsome boy, though somehow, like the Jack Miner story itself, his very ungainliness achieved heroic dimensions, capable of stopping "a through express train." Nor would he ever pass an opportunity to lovingly describe himself. "Reader, picture it if you can, the proud bashful smile on my freckled face."

This bashful, freckle-faced boy was also a ruthless market hunter. The term dates back four hundred years and designates a man who engages in the unlimited slaughter of animals for money. Jack Miner became expert at it. "Market hunting," he wrote, "is not a sport, it is murder in the first degree." According to Jack, he "soon outgrew this murderous practice, and hunted for pleasure only."

At seventeen Jack Miner was invited to guide a group of prominent Essex County gentlemen on a hunting trip. This story became central to the myth that sprang up around him: an uncouth, barefoot boy whose brilliance in the bush is recognized at once by his wealthy, influential betters – in his words, great men who "told clean stories," one of whom demands admiringly, "Young man, who taught you to disembowel a deer?" Within the hagiography of Wild Goose Jack it signifies young Jack's acceptance by his moral and social superiors. In the myths of the era this little anecdote typifies the belief that a simple man leading a clean Christian life will be financially rewarded. It also predicts Jack Miner's lifelong penchant for ingratiating himself with wealthy and prominent men. Seventeen was also the year that God "laid his hands on me and melted my revengeful heart into love." This conversion that Jack Miner is writing about is not a decision to stop hunting, but to stop hunting *on Sunday*, which by Canadian law was already illegal.

In 1888 he married a local woman, Laona Wigle, whom he described as "one of the dearest Christian girls that ever loved and feared God." That same year, the Ontario government banned the moose hunt. Quebec, however, still permitted a season on the vanishing animal. When Jack made his first moose-hunting trip in Quebec, he wrote the partridges were "so tame we killed all we wanted with stones." The moose he and his party merely wounded were left to thrash around in the Quebec bush until they died.

In 1891 his first child, a son, Carl, was born; in 1894, a daughter, Pearl. Three years later, as Jack Miner was planning another moose-hunting trip, young Pearl lost consciousness and died the same day. Of this tragedy he wrote: "All thoughts of going hunting or anywhere else except to her lonely little grave, had completely vanished from my mind." Two weeks later he was back in the Quebec bush, hunting moose.

A year later in a tragic hunting blunder, his brother Ted was shot in the back of the head at close range by a family friend, and killed. Jack Miner, who carefully fostered an image of himself as the greatest hunter in Canada, was flushing the moose toward his brother when the accident occurred. How he could have been involved in such a deadly mishap will never be known, but like most things in the Jack Miner story, the myth and man refuse to occupy the same space. "Don't ever ask me to go hunting," he stated after his brother's death. "I can never go hunting again." Jack got over his grief and several months later was back in the Quebec bush, hunting moose.

In 1900, Jack Miner, thirty-five years old and, according to him, completely illiterate, began to conduct a Sunday school class. Jack's famed illiteracy is a cornerstone of the Miner myth, exemplifying both a belief in the conquering power of the individual will and a deep-rooted suspicion of formal education. When asked by a young student if the moose lost its antlers, Jack Miner was in his element and wrote, "Stop right there, dear people, and think. Was there a man on the North American continent better qualified to

Believing that a message of conservation learned early in life would endure, Miner took a special interest in children. He devoted half of his thirty-minute radio broadcasts in the 1930s to children, which sparked the formation of junior bird clubs, and encouraged them to build bird houses, which inspired bird-house-building contests, such as this one in Peterborough, Ontario, in 1929.

answer this ... boy's question?" According to Jack, he learned to read by listening to his students' recitations from the Bible. He was struck in particular by a quote from Genesis: "God gave man dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowls of the air and every living thing that creepeth upon it."

Jack had been teaching Sunday school for four years when his thirteen-year-old son Carl died of appendicitis. Jack's portrayal of this tragedy reads, unfortunately, as an epistle to his own greatness as a father. According to Jack, his dying child was so overwhelmed by gratitude *to him* that his final words were: "Oh papa, how I wish I could have lived so I could have paid you back for some of your kindness."

About this time he began his first attempts to lure geese onto his property. In a frequently quoted passage he describes a span of wild geese that flew overhead and recognized him, at once, as the enemy. Jack was so galled by this that he determined to do something about it. It is not impossible that behind the braggart was a broken, grief-stricken man who had grown up under the shadow of an alcoholic father, witnessed the death of two children and a beloved brother, and now felt the need to engage in the basic human impulse to feel something alive and warm come close to him.

In April 1908, after four years of fruitless efforts, eleven Canada geese finally landed on Jack Miner's property. Three weeks later, with Jack's permission, five of them were shot by neighbours. The following year thirty-two geese arrived on the property. A third of them were shot. Jack also began raising ducks, clipping their wings and selling their ducklings as live decoys to local hunters. It was under these circumstances that the Jack Miner Migratory Bird Sanctuary was born.

Shortly after this, something astonishing happened to Jack Miner – he became famous. Today it is difficult to understand exactly why, but in the early years of the twentieth century, the killing of wild animals still carried with it a potent moral symbolism – the Christian duty to cleanse a savage land. The wilderness writings of Grey Owl, which promoted a sympathetic attitude toward animals, were a decade off, and even the statutes of the newly formed Algonquin Park called virtuously for the annihilation of the wolf, the wild cat, "and other noxious animals." A person deliberately giving sanctuary to a wild goose or a duck had a "man-bites-dog" weirdness to it that the press found irresistible.

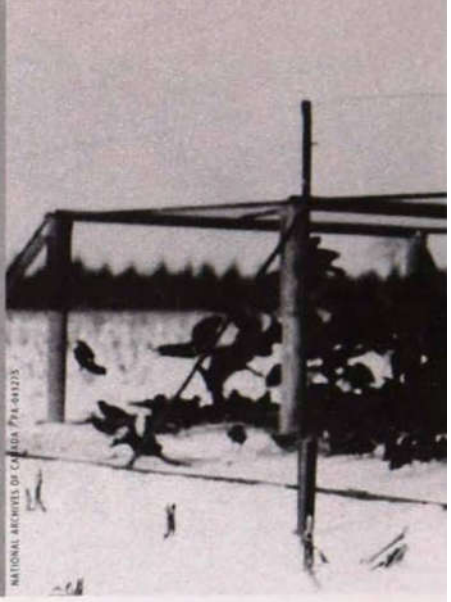
In 1909 Jack began banding fowl. Despite the myth, he was far from the first person to band birds. By 1909 bird-banding had become so widespread in the United States that the American Bird Banding Association was formed. He was, arguably, the first person, in his own words, to "fill the whole room with heavenly bread right from God's own oven of love," and make himself in the process "twice as famous." This fame was based on the Biblical verse that Jack stamped on one side of the band. The first banded goose to be shot bore the Scripture, "Have Faith In God." According to Jack, when the shooter read that tag to his friends on a street corner in the southern United States, "they had the effect of a real benediction ... and a hush fell." The "miracle" of Wild Goose Jack had begun in earnest.

On stage, dressed in his custom-made signature red-plaid trousers tucked into knee-high hunting boots, he embodied the perfect country bumpkin.

Soon some very wealthy people became intrigued. The beginning days of wildlife conservation were led by such men – millionaire hunters hoping to protect their sport. American president Theodore Roosevelt was one of them. The attention of the great industrialist Henry Ford was also piqued, and he loaned Jack his personal cinematographer, Ed Flickenger, who filmed Jack Miner's sanctuary, providing Jack with footage that he used during his later lecture tours. Conceivably Jack Miner was the first lecturer in North America to incorporate the powerful new medium of film into his talks. These talks he gave are said to have changed the English-speaking world's attitude toward nature.

Strangely, neither the tapes nor the transcripts of Jack's lectures exist anymore, and we have only the word of the

To-Night!
"Jack Miner"
The Greatest Canadian Naturalist and Conservationist.
"The Man who made the Wild Goose Tame"
Victoria Opera House
Eight o'clock
It will prove one of the greatest educational and instructive speeches you have ever had the pleasure of listening to.
Motion picture of bird life which will astonish you, including the famous "crow trap" which captured 500 in one day.
Children's Matinee—10c.
Send your little ones to the Matinee at 4.15—you will NEVER regret it—they will NEVER forget it.
Reserved Seats, 50c. Rush, 25c.



Jack Miner Foundation as to how significant these talks really were. We know that "Uncle Jack," as he called himself, sometimes broke into song, leading the audience in spirited versions of "Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit Bag." He told anti-Semitic "Ickie and Jakie" stories: "Mister I don't look like so much, but I make lots ... my cheque is good for seventy-five thousand." He made jokes about "Injun Joe and his squaw." "Everybody think like me," he mocked. "Everybody want my squaw." On stage, dressed in his custom-made signature red-plaid trousers tucked into knee-high hunting boots, he embodied the perfect country bumpkin, pandering to the racial assumptions of his age, and merging an extremely white-skinned interpretation of nature with what he was pleased to call Methodism.

Armed with professional film footage financed by one of the richest men in the world, and spouting his "Minerisms," as they came to be called, Jack Miner took to the lecture tour with military precision. A standardized information sheet was printed up and mass-mailed to prospective sponsors. It was a no-nonsense document: "I have 2,000 feet of motion pictures ... you supply the machine. MACHINE MUST BE STANDARD SIZE!" This was followed by the now familiar Jack Miner personality—a false and loud humility combined with one hundred percent pure flapdoodle: "As to my personality I am just a grown up boy who was born bare-footed and raised on the toe of father's boot; now grown out of the pink and into the silver-tip class with all to be thankful for and nothing to boast of ... I am still carrying a hundred pounds of steam and no damper."

He performed as many as five times a day for forty days in a row, operating the first 35mm projector in Canada and accompanied everywhere by a film technician who doubled as a chauffeur. When he lectured to children in the afternoon, he urged them to bring their parents in the evening. His apologists imply that Jack did not charge admission to children, but his posters state emphatically "Children 10 cents (rush 25 cents)." His son Manly softened up potential audiences with some aggressive front work. "A week ahead I advised the [sponsoring group] to have the mayor meet the train and have a band out. They did all this plus having the Prime Minister of the Province which resulted in the press giving the occasion front page publicity." By his own account Manly had a thousand community newspapers on his mailing list.

There was simply no stopping the great Jack Miner. He began to write books, or at least dictate them to his son Manly. These books, often self-published and sold by mail order to maximize profit, have been conveniently overlooked by gushing commentators of the Jack Miner story. Vain, eccentric, and idiomatic, they contain such enlightening chapters as "Weasels, and How to Destroy Them," "Some Things I have Known Cannibal Birds to Do," and "Duck's Love Soon Ceases." Included in one is a blueprint of the "Jack Miner Crow Trap" for those readers who want to help Jack eradicate that "black, cold-blooded highway murderer"—the crow. Jack's literary output consists of two books, bewilderingly rearranged, republished, and resold under different titles, two of them published well after his death in an apparent attempt to revive the flagging phenomenon of Wild Goose Jack. Some of these editions contain so many typographical errors that it is difficult not to suspect they have been deliberately inserted, fostering the unlettered-country-boy element of Jack's reputation and underscoring his deep contempt for "book lerning" (his spelling). As for the writing, it is perhaps enough to say that when he is not occupied with complimenting himself, Jack attempts to give the reader "a taste" of what the woods "smell like."

With this new and growing stature Jack Miner became nearly untouchable. If the Canadian government suggested [he] put something other than Scripture on his famous bands ... Jack would laugh their city-bred ignorance right out of the room.

It was not Jack's leaden books alone that brought him his baffling celebrity. According to Jack, every time a banded bird was shot, the story was picked up by a thousand newspapers (he does not say if these are the same thousand newspapers as on his son's mailing list). Accolade was heaped upon accolade, interviews took place, meetings with great personages were arranged, radio talks were given. The Uncle Jack mythology was being created.

Because man had upset the balance of nature, it was man, Miner believed, who needed to take corrective action. Hunters, for instance, shot certain birds for food, but did not shoot their natural enemies in the same proportion. Thus, such predators as crows (which, drawn by the eggs of ducks, were a particular problem at his sanctuary) increased in unwarranted numbers. To redress this particular situation, Miner invented the crow trap. Captured crows, of which as many as five hundred were said to have been caught at one time, were turned over to trapshooters. The crows were given a sporting chance to escape while the shooters were fined for the birds they missed. Miner, who also applied this strategy to starlings, was strongly criticized by naturalists and wildlife experts who believed that nature must be allowed to balance itself. However, as the ecological importance of predation was little understood at the time, many people shared Miner's attitude.

With this new and growing stature Jack Miner became nearly untouchable. If the Canadian government suggested or even begged him to put something other than Scripture on his famous bands – the sex of the goose for example, or its weight, or approximate age – Jack would laugh their city-bred ignorance right out of the room. The "father of conservation" would have no truck with science.

In the early twenties when Canadian and U.S. governments issued identical, numbered bands to naturalists in an effort to correlate bird-banding information, Jack Miner contemptuously dismissed the enterprise and refused to participate. His own Scripture-stamped bands were bringing him constant attention from the press, and he had no interest in sharing that fame. "You young whippersnappers," he wrote, "just out of college ... who sit in your offices and tell me how it should be done!" He viewed the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial, allowing evolution to be taught in U.S. schools, as a disgusting perversion. "Apeism," he called it to his dying day, and it meant as little to him as what he liked to call "the price of pork grease in Jerusalem."

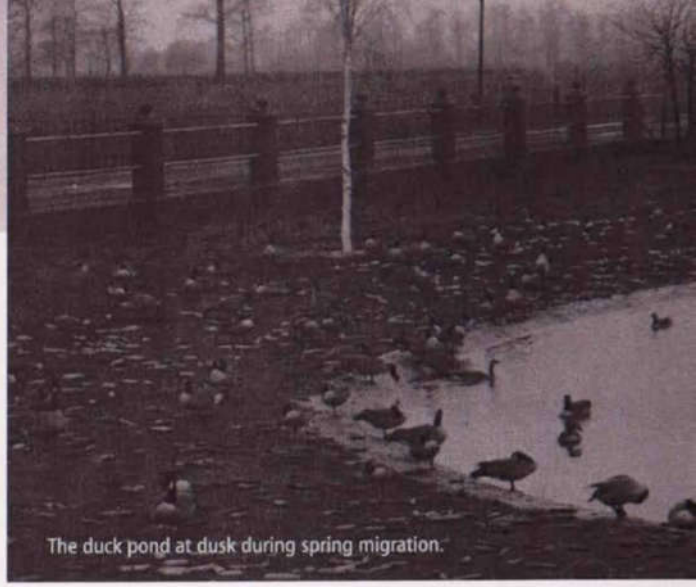
Today it is almost impossible to discern what exactly it was that Jack Miner *did*. Both *Groliers Encyclopedia* and *The Canadian Encyclopedia* refer to him as a naturalist or a "noted naturalist," although the majority of Jack's observations on nature are not only incorrect, they border on lunacy. The sole reason the moose possesses antlers, he insisted, was because God deliberately put them there to protect the female from the un-Christian "crazed" and "ravishing sexual desire" of the bull. According to Jack, the horns of the male get tangled in the bush, allowing the female to run away. Invariably it is the sexual monogamy of animals that decide where they stand in the Jack Miner hierarchy. "I believe every man has the right to take two women," he often joked, "provided one of them is his mother-in-law." He referred to his own wife as "my mother-in-law's daughter."

This lecture-circuit humour reveals a very serious clue to Jack's interpretation of the animal kingdom. The skunk was not monogamous and therefore should be exterminated. The passenger pigeon should also be exterminated – was, in fact, by God himself. Jack, to the end, insisted the extinction of the passenger pigeon had nothing do with netting or hunting, but was an act of Divine Providence. God, presumably disgusted by the sexual antics of the creature, reached down from heaven and smote it from the face of the earth. "Yes I want the world to know that I have sound reasons for saying that the gun did not exterminate the passenger pigeon, but that it was the power of Almighty God."

The goose, the duck, and the songbirds, protected by their Christian monogamy, occupied the top echelon of Jack Miner's peculiar nature fantasy. "The Canada goose is eternally loyal to its mate setting a noble example for us to follow," he wrote. "When in captivity he will wash himself up and keep clean and respectable and, in about three years, with his mate, will settle down to raise a family of from four to eight, as all Canadians should." In the end, his "practical naturalism" is a Freudian's delight, fraught with sexual fear, inadvertent references to mother-love, and the symbolic manifestation of the goose as the great mother herself. Of course, in the Jack Miner universe, any animal that dared to attack a songbird or a goose – "my pets" he called them – required ruthless extermination. The timber wolf was also a prime target and he urged the people of Ontario "to work harmoniously together and beat the wolf to death."

In 1930, a sixty-five-year-old man, Uncle Jack shot sixty hawks and packed them off to the zoology department of the Royal Ontario Museum to have their stomach contents analyzed. Most of the species were known to feed on small birds, and Jack was hopeful his overwhelming evidence would lead to a legalized assault on hawks. He sent out a press release to that effect. In case the "armchair theorists" at the museum missed the point, he jammed a meadowlark down the throat of one of his specimens. Unfortunately for Jack, even the most junior armchair theorist knew that a hawk ripped its prey into small pieces before consuming it. The only person who didn't know, it seems, was Jack Miner.

Scientists and nonprofessionals alike were outraged. A nature poet penned "A Rebuke to Jack Miner." The New Jer-



The duck pond at dusk during spring migration.

sey Audubon Society warned of "the deplorable danger" posed by "a lopsided conservationist." None of this had any effect on the popularity of Jack Miner. The father of conservation scoffed at what he called "armchair naturalists" and quoted Scripture at them. The provincial government, fearful of Jack's immense popularity, scrapped its own statute, which, until then, had restricted the shooting of hawks and owls.

In the formidable opinion of Wild Goose Jack, the "heartless and murderous" owl, "the baby murder[ing]" crow, all other "cannibal birds," the wolf, the weasel, and the muskrat needed to be wiped from the face of the earth to make way for a new order, ushered in by Jack Miner and his nonadulterous winged messengers of God. It was on the wings of these messengers that Uncle Jack is credited with Christianizing the Indian and the "Eskimo." According to the *Saturday Evening Post*, whenever a native hunter shot a banded bird, he brought the band to the local missionary and asked "What has God said this time?" Uncle Jack, an amateur painter of "brightly coloured Bible scenes," would trade one of his paintings in exchange for a returned band. This method of spreading the gospel was said to be so effective that by 1944, at least according to the *Post*, "there's hardly an igloo in these Northern wilds whose interior isn't decorated with some of Jack's scenes." Forty years later CBC Enterprises published a book which confidently insisted that Jack's banded geese caused native communities to "explode in a rebirth of religious fervour," producing finally "the greatest religious revival that missionaries had seen in 30 years."

This type of gullible and reverential language clouds nearly all writings about Jack Miner. Somehow, in the presence of the Uncle Jack phenomenon, even seasoned reporters set aside their skepticism and were reduced to a quasi-religious mumbo jumbo that turned Jack into a visible incarnation of God himself: white-haired, grandfatherly, tall, severe, and all knowing, with his arms spread out in front of him. Jack, it turns out, did not just feed shell corn to geese, he "ministered to their needs." "There he stands," observes one writer, "true, clean and wholesome." Jack Miner, we are assured, "has opened doors to wonders that are beyond believing."

Given the portrayal of Jack Miner as a saintly being, it is not surprising that he has been credited with single-handedly bringing Christianity to the inhabitants of the far north. While this claim may have comforted his admirers, it in no way manages to hide his contempt for the native peoples of Canada. "Indians or half breeds and their squaws," he wrote, were "the most inhumane" slaughterers of the beaver that he had ever seen. "I have only killed 72 beavers in my whole life," he brags weirdly. He then goes on to say "I have never heard one Indian even hint at conserving anything." These inhumane slaughterers were abetted by what Jack called "the drowsy-looking Jew" fur-buyer. The Indian and the Jew working together to wipe out the wild animals of North America – it is a conspiracy that forms the shadowy backdrop of Jack's message, and may explain at least some of his popularity in the press.

Today it seems clear that the Jack Miner story was built on a foundation of contempt. Included in it was anyone with a formal education or a coolness toward hunting. It took in the government, scientists, experts, specialists, and school teachers. Reading, writing, science, medicine, botany, geography, and any form of study beyond the Bible and back issues of *Rod & Gun* were a waste of time. In the vernacular of Jack Miner and the newspapermen who vaulted him to stardom, there were no scientists, only "so-called scientists," "so-called experts," and "university men," a term that dripped with contempt. Jack Miner, we are told by the *Toronto Daily Star*, "did more to protect wildlife than all the school room advice which was

Jack Miner with two of his three sons, Manly [left], born in 1897, and Ted, born in 1900. After Jack's death in 1944, stewardship of the sanctuary, which in the Depression was incorporated as a charitable foundation, passed to Manly, who managed it with his brother Jasper, born in 1910.

given in the same period." "The greatest practical naturalist on the planet," declared the *Saturday Evening Post*. College would have left him "cribbed, cabined and confined." The code is obvious and expresses the era's reverence for the self-made man and the rugged individualist. As for those lowly "so-called experts" quietly gathering data on the habits of wildlife in an attempt to formulate responsible game-law policy, they were dismissed and ridiculed in the face of the unquestioned anecdotes of the great Jack Miner.

In 1931 the Jack Miner Migratory Bird Sanctuary was incorporated by a special act of the Province of Ontario and will stay open in perpetuity as a "permanent memorial to Jack Miner." In a promotional flyer, the Miners described the site as "this one place on earth where no money will ever change hands." The same flyer urged readers to "Make All Cheques Payable and Send To: The Jack Miner Foundation," and closed with a plea to keep the foundation in mind "When Making Your Will." It was at this sanctuary, critics say, that Jack Miner, by domesticating geese from their natural wariness, caused the death of more geese than he ever possibly saved. As early as 1916, Indians in the James Bay area reported geese banded with Scripture, tamer than the rest, coming down to meet decoys where the remaining flock would not. A Hudson's Bay Company factor wrote to Jack explaining that "birds that have recourse to your sanctuary ... fall very easy victims to gunners." It was also at his much-publicized sanctuary that Jack kept wild geese in pens, allowing visitors to experience what one writer called the "privilege of releasing them."

In 1947 the federal government set aside the week of April 10, Jack's birthday, to commemorate National Wildlife Week. Nearly two decades later Manly Miner, in a prose style that suggests he had more to do with his father's books than just taking dictation, informed the Canadian Tourist Association that he was "not speaking boastfully but it is through the contact I have kept with the press that has helped put National Wildlife Week over. ... It is father's name and fame that has put National Wildlife Week over." The choice of words is interesting. They may well describe what Jack Miner did. He "put one over" on just about everyone. By 1950 the sanctuary lagged behind only the Dionne quintuplets and Niagara Falls as the most popular Canadian destination for American tourists. Promotional literature states that at its height ten thousand cars a day passed through.

That height has long passed—on a spring day in 2000 I was the only visitor in attendance. Today the Jack Miner Migratory Bird Foundation is still banding birds with Scripture. In 1999 three hundred and six newly banded Canada geese were flying the skyways of North America with an aluminum tag attached to them that read, "Cast All Your Care Upon God." These bands, "unique and highly prized by collectors," can be ordered off the Jackminer.com website for twenty-five dollars each.

Like the moose that he once caricaturized as a sex-crazed animal, Jack Miner himself became a caricature and crackpot, a spokesman for millionaire big-game hunters and a tireless self-promoter with a burning need to glorify himself and his views. By his own admission he never read a book. He thought history a waste of time and wanted it abolished. He had a habit of calling Canada "America." Like many turn-of-the-century Canadians he watched his children die of fever, saw his loved ones and relatives destroyed by alcohol or shot dead in hunting accidents. He hunted raccoons, made stew out of squirrels, and lived on potatoes. As a grown man he inscribed Scripture on aluminum bands and attached them to the legs of terrified ducks and wild geese. He became famous and was awarded the Order of the British Empire by King George VI. It has been said that "he loved nothing more than to see a hawk or owl dying slowly hanging upside on one of his pole traps." In his own words he was "brought up by God from a barefoot underprivileged boy to be a man respected by millions." A contemporary and acquaintance, John Jasperson, probably got it right when he said of the man, "he was a preacher ... he was a salesman, he was a huckster."

Jack Miner died at age seventy-six at home in Kingsville, Ontario in 1944. His coffin was laid to rest in a wagonload of soil transported north from his native state of Ohio. 🖼

Peter Unwin is the author of the novel *Nine Bells for a Man*, a true story about Canada's largest inland marine disaster. He is currently working on a book about Lake Superior.

et cetera

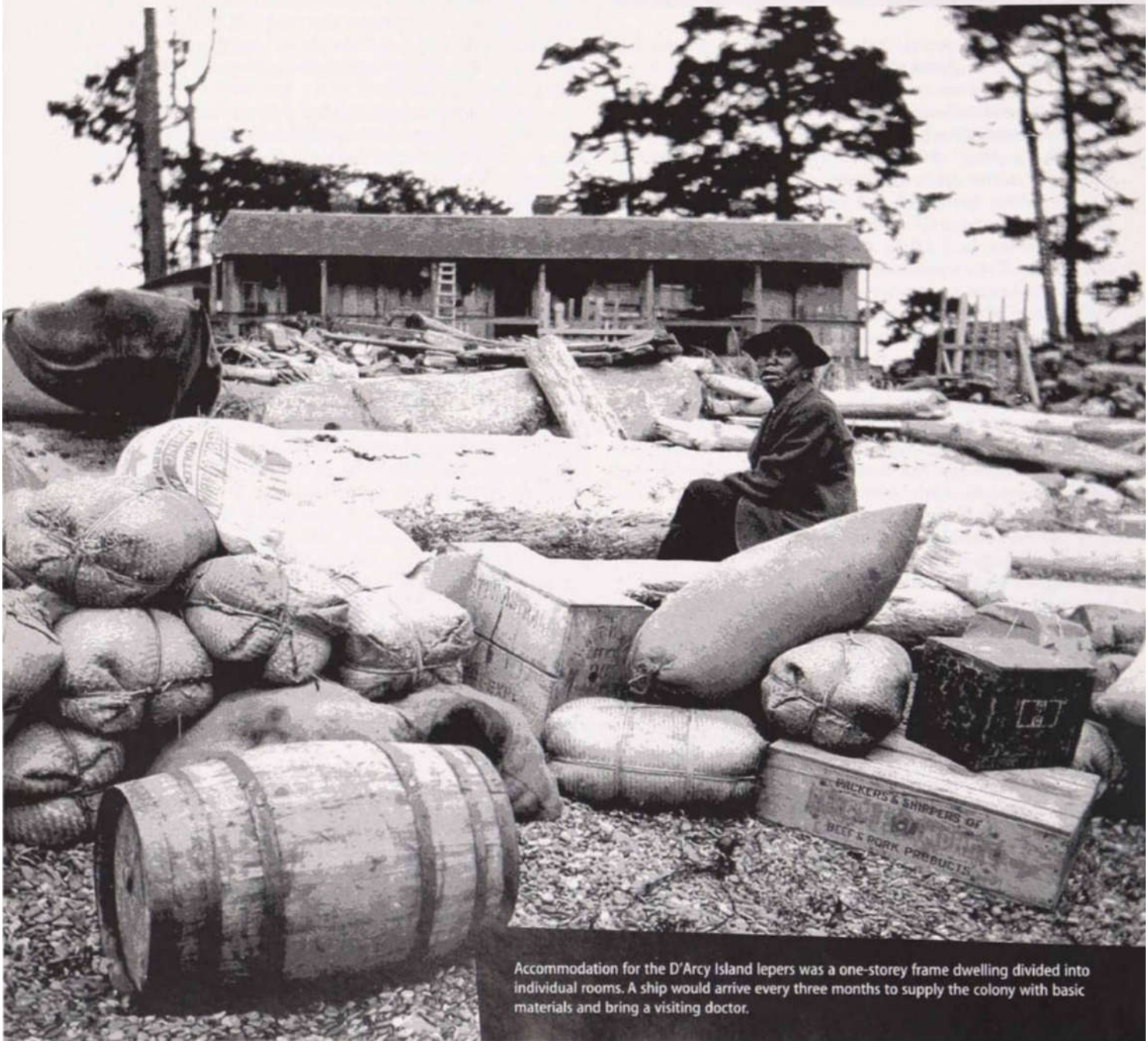
The Story of Wild Goose Jack: The Life and Work of Jack Miner by James M. Linton and Calvin W. Moore. CBC Enterprises, Toronto, 1984.

Wild Goose Jack: A Documentary Film on the Life of Jack Miner, by Michael Dana Murphy. Clear Horizon Films, Toronto, 1983. Distributor: National Film Board of Canada, 1-800-267-7710 or <www.nfb.ca>.

EXILE ISLAND

BY ANN CHANDLER The fear of leprosy was once so dreaded that its victims were cast out into separate colonies sustained only by occasional acts of charity. One such colony was D'Arcy Island, off Canada's west coast. Today it's a place of peace and tranquility, but a century ago it was anything but.

Less than thirty kilometres from the coast of Vancouver Island lies an uninhabited island little more than a kilometre in width. A provincial marine park, its peaceful pebble beaches are sometimes visited by the occasional kayaker or marine camper, who stops to savour its tranquility. Though its shores are seldom walked upon, visitors report being overcome by feelings of grief and loneliness. The island's serenity belies a disturbing past; campers are unaware they tread on unmarked graves. Somewhere on the island lie the bones of fifteen men who were banished there to die, victims of a feared and misunderstood disease.

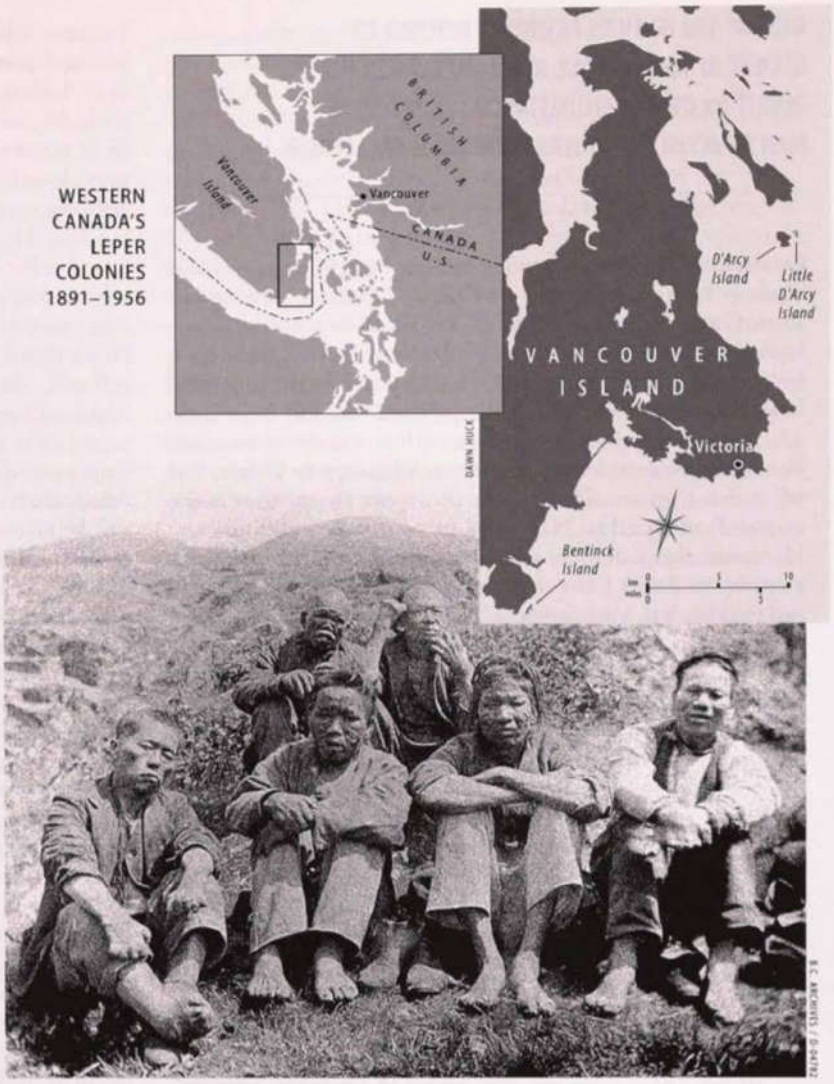


Accommodation for the D'Arcy Island lepers was a one-storey frame dwelling divided into individual rooms. A ship would arrive every three months to supply the colony with basic materials and bring a visiting doctor.

From 1891 to 1924, D'Arcy Island was western Canada's only leper colony. In the spring of 1891, the City of Victoria discovered five Chinese men afflicted with leprosy living in a shack behind the Kwong Wo & Co. store on Fisgard Street. At odds about what to do with the men, but feeling compelled to take action, members of the sanitary committee of the city council discreetly applied to the provincial government for the acquisition of D'Arcy Island "for sanitary purposes." Their efforts to avoid alarming the populace proved to be in vain when the Victoria *Times* published "Where the Lepers Will Live."

After being held under guard at the shacks on Fisgard Street, the five Chinese men – Sim Lee, Ng Chung, Chin You, Nap Sing, and Ah Chee – were transported to D'Arcy Island aboard the steamer *Alert* on May 20. "More repulsive looking human beings would be hard to imagine. Each was a total physical wreck, and their features were so distorted, disfigured and swollen as to be almost out of human semblance," the *Daily Colonist* reported. The five men regarded their impending exile as fearful punishment and pleaded for delay. So frightened were they about the prospect of being isolated from family and friends that one of the men, Ng Chung, attempted to slit his throat with a large carving knife, only to have it wrested away from him by a guard. Among the officials accompanying them on the voyage was Dr. A.C. Smith of New Brunswick. Dr. Smith had supervised the leper hospital at Tracadie, New Brunswick, and had been assigned by the federal government to confirm the diagnosis of leprosy and report on the prevalence of the disease in British Columbia. He was known for his strict "complete isolation" approach to leprosy, and assured city officials that by removing the individuals with such haste they would be preventing the rapid spread of the disease. But the D'Arcy Island leper colony was far removed from the comforts of its eastern counterpart in Tracadie. While the leprosarium at Tracadie had doctors and nurses to care for the sick, residents of D'Arcy were forced to rely on themselves.

Workers had constructed a one-storey frame dwelling for the lepers' island accommodation. Fronted by a long porch, it was divided into six individual rooms. Five contained sparse furnishings and linen, while the sixth was to be used for storage. Fishing gear, gardening tools, and seeds were supplied. Arrangements had been made for a supply ship to deliver food, clothing, and occasionally opium to the island every three months, along with a visiting doctor. The ship would eventually bring coffins on its regular supply run, as well.



With few exceptions, the residents of the D'Arcy Island leprosarium between 1891 and 1924 were Chinese. Though one journalist noted utter despair and hopelessness among them, they did manage to keep busy cultivating land, harvesting vegetables and fruit, and tending to livestock.

The island's inhabitants proved to be industrious despite the crippling effects of the disease, and busied themselves cultivating a small portion of land. They managed to produce a flourishing vegetable garden and orchard that, according to one newspaper account in May 1894, "would be the envy of almost any of the local gardeners." In addition to their horticultural pursuits, the men tended a small menagerie of chickens, ducks, and pigs, and made themselves at home by papering the walls of their cabins with old editions of the *Colonist* or displaying boldly coloured Chinese New Year's cards as a remembrance of missed family celebrations.

According to some reports, the only Caucasian patient to be taken to the original island colony was a Russian-German immigrant named Alexander Sundy, who had resided in the Chinese community of Victoria and had apparently contracted the disease there. His arrival in March 1893 was not welcomed by the residents, who shunned him and refused to bury his body when he died shortly afterward. Threatened with having their supplies cut off, they reluctantly agreed to bury him.

When isolated cases of Chinese with leprosy were discovered in Van-

EACH OF THE ISLAND'S RESIDENTS REFUSED TO BELIEVE HE HAD LEPROSY, AND EACH BLAMED HIS PLIGHT ON OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES. ... YET EACH MAN BELIEVED THE OTHERS SUFFERED FROM LEPROSY.

couver and in some interior communities, the individuals were in turn incarcerated on D'Arcy Island. In December 1891, Oung Moi Toy had been delivered to the island following an incredible journey. He and another Chinese man believed to be suffering from leprosy had been deported from the United States after being discovered in New York. They were shipped under quarantine, via the Canadian Pacific Railway to Vancouver, for sea passage to China, but when no ship would agree to transport them, they were ordered returned to New York by Vancouver authorities. However, the federal government intercepted their return journey in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and they were ordered back to Vancouver so as not to offend the American authorities. At first confined to a shack by CPR authorities while the City of Vancouver negotiated to have Ottawa assume responsibility for their care, the two were eventually released when Ottawa refused. Left to wander the streets and fend for themselves, the men were subsequently returned to the CPR shack following public outcry. When they were examined by health officials, one of the men was discovered to be suffering from syphilis, not leprosy, and he was sent on his way with a new set of clothes. The remaining man, Oung Moi Toy, whose medical exam confirmed the diagnosis of leprosy, requested that he be returned to his family in China, but since passage under quarantine could not be secured, he was transported to D'Arcy Island. The City of Vancouver agreed to pay the cost of his supplies and accommodation.

By the fall of 1894, the population of the island community had reached nine. One man, a Chinese miner from Kamloops, had reportedly been boxed up in a crate and shipped from Vancouver, after being deserted by his fellow countrymen. Having already lost his toes, the man was referred to as "a shocking sight." As other municipalities sought to quarantine their leprosy patients on the island, the question of who was going to bear the cost of maintaining the colony soon became an issue. Victoria city council demanded that other communities contribute a proportional share of the financial burden. Council argued that the island facility ought to be the responsibility of the federal government under the authority of the Quarantine Act, as was the case for the leprosarium at Tracadie. Ottawa did not agree, and although limited amounts of money were granted from time to time to help defray operational costs, it wasn't until 1906 that the federal government finally assumed responsibility for the cost of operating the leprosarium at D'Arcy.

In April 1896, Dr. Smith wrote to Ottawa recommending that the patients at D'Arcy be transferred to the leper hospital at Tracadie where they would receive much better medical care at a substantially lower cost, but his suggestion was ignored. A Vancouver *Province* article suggested transferring the men to William Head Quarantine Station near Victoria, where they would feel more comfortable and less isolated from friends and family. While city fathers bickered over dollars and cents, the lepers on D'Arcy continued to struggle along on their own with no effectual medical care, their numbers rapidly dwindling. Reports by medical officers described conditions on the island as deplorable, yet nothing was done. Handicapped by blindness and further burdened by grotesquely deformed hands and feet, the men found self-reliance increasingly difficult and were forced to rely on one another for assistance and care. When a doctor suggested to one sufferer who was hobbling about on his knees that his useless hand should be amputated, the man refused, saying, "Suppose you cut him off, no can cook." Some of the men believed they were merely awaiting passage home to China and, with each arrival of the supply ship, anxiously anticipated the news that never came. Some cried when officials refused to take them off the island.

An offer by a missionary woman named Mrs. Hansel to reside on the island and care for the lepers in the summer of 1894 was rejected by the attorney general's office in a letter stating, "the devoted services which Mrs. Hansel is prepared to render might be applied to a cause still more in the interests and for the benefit of mankind ... they [the lepers] have been well attended and it would seem that the misery of their lot can hardly be alleviated by placing a guardian among them."

Some media reports revealed more personal views. In June 1895, a journalist accompanying officials on a visit of inspection quoted one of the officials as saying, "They're better off than half the white people these hard times, that is, in a way, of course. They have all they want to eat and drink, little or nothing to do, and nothing to worry them. Oh yes, they're fairly contented – or would be if we'd keep them supplied with opium." The journalist noted only utter despair and hopelessness in the men. Each of the island's residents refused to believe he had leprosy, and each blamed his plight on other circumstances. Nap Sing was sure that his feet had rotted away from working in watery swampland. Fong Sin Loi blamed handling the pick and shovel for his sore hands. Chin Wah Yuen blamed poison ivy. Lang Nung from Manitoba blamed his dilapidated appendages on frostbite. Yet each man believed the others suffered from leprosy. While no official reports confirmed any successful escapes from the island, rumours abounded. The most remarkable involved a newly married young man who tried desperately to avoid being wrenched from the arms of his bride and isolated on the dreaded island, but failed. Following his incarceration, his young wife, determined to take matters into her own hands, sailed off to D'Arcy Island in a sloop to aid his escape. The couple reportedly were never seen again.

In the evening of June 15, 1899, a fire broke out in the main building of the colony, badly damaging the east wing. One resident, Lim Sam, died in the fire and another burned his face and hands. In his annual report for 1900, Medical Health Officer Dr. Fraser reported:

> *I paid four visits to the Leper Station on Darcey [sic] Island. There are at present five patients, all Chinese. Three of these are quite helpless. Only one is really able to work, and he refuses, in any way, to assist his unfortunate*

companions. The time has now arrived when something more than merely supplying food and clothing must be done for these patients. As all representations to the Dominion Government on this matter have been fruitless, I would suggest that the care of the lepers be assumed by the Provincial Government. The problem of supplying suitable nursing and attendance to the unfortunate residents of Darcey Island should be faced at once.

Victoria continued to pressure the federal government for financial compensation, reminding them that each of the Chinese paid Ottawa the fifty-dollar poll tax for entry to Canada. This persistence finally brought results, and in 1900 Ottawa increased its contributions on the condition that future financial responsibility for the leprosarium be borne wholly by the provincial government. The province agreed, and beginning in 1903 bore the expense of the maintenance of D'Arcy Island until the passing of the Leprosy Act in July 1906, when the federal government at last assumed full responsibility for the leper colony.

Finally, D'Arcy Island and its lepers received some long overdue attention. The eight Chinese lepers residing on D'Arcy at the time of the transfer of authority were eventually transported back to China. The existing structures on the island were burned to the ground, a caretaker's cottage was constructed, and new residences for the lepers and the interpreter were built on nearby Little D'Arcy Island, 400 metres away. The leprosarium gained a Chinese interpreter and a guardian, as well as the administration of medical attention and the delivery of fresh fruit, vegetables, and meat.

Federal intervention had brought a new dimension to the colony, which became primarily a detention and medical treatment centre. Cases of leprosy were surfacing in individuals of other ethnic origins and, like the Chinese, some of these individuals were deported when a ship willing to return them to their country of origin could be secured. In the meantime, they were isolated on the island. In 1917 new residences were built on the larger island, and the buildings on Little D'Arcy were abandoned. When lepers were no longer deported, the island became a facility for treatment and care until death or cure. To the good fortune of the island residents, Mr. H.T. McKee was appointed guardian in 1918. His wife was a nurse and cared for the lepers on a volunteer basis. In 1920 she became an official assistant guardian and stayed there until the facility was moved to nearby Bentinck Island in the spring of 1924. When the last resident leprosy patient at the Bentinck Island facility died in 1956, the leprosarium was closed the following year. D'Arcy Island became a marine park in 1967. After an archaeological assessment confirmed the current park campsite was constructed on the original site of the leprosarium, the City of Victoria erected a plaque to recognize the men who died on the island between 1891 and 1906. B.C. Parks has followed with a display explaining the history of the leprosarium. Visitors who walk on D'Arcy's tranquil shores can now share in the knowledge of the island's legacy and the lepers of D'Arcy can rest, knowing they will not be forgotten.

Ann Chandler recently completed her bachelor degree with honours in anthropology specializing in forensic anthropology and osteoarchaeology. She is a freelance writer living in New Westminster, B.C.

et cetera

***Island of Shadows*, documentary film produced by Erik Paulsson, Red Storm Productions, Vancouver, 2000. Distributors: FilmWest Associates, <info@filmwest.com>.**

***A Measure of Value: The Story of the D'Arcy Island Leper Colony* by Chris Yorath. Horsdal & Schubart Publishers Ltd., Victoria, 2000.**

DEMYSTIFYING THE DISEASE

The organism responsible for leprosy was identified in 1873 when a Norwegian physician, G.A. Hansen, isolated the rod-shaped bacillus *Myobacterium leprae*, giving the disease its more common medical name, Hansen's disease. When D'Arcy Island's leprosarium was established, medical officials had mixed opinions on the disease's contagiousness. Today, the exact mode of transmission is still not known, but it's believed to be respiratory. Leprosy was treated with a variety of remedies, among them arsenic, mercury, and chaulmoogra oil, a derivative of a member of the Indian plum family. Chaulmoogra oil was the most commonly used, but reportedly brought little relief and came with a variety of unpleasant side effects, including nausea. Doctors at Tracadie had been administering the treatment for many years, but it was not used at D'Arcy until the island came under the control of the federal government in 1906. Before then, opium was apparently the only source of relief available to the residents of D'Arcy. It arrived only occasionally. It wasn't until the late 1940s, with the introduction of the sulfone drug Dapsone, that a cure was found. Leprosy today is successfully treated with a trio of drugs: Rifampicin, Clofazimine, and Dapsone.

Mentioned directly or alluded to in the Bible, leprosy, now known as Hansen's Disease, was a scourge of the ancient world. In Job 2:7, Satan smites Job "with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown," generally interpreted as leprosy. In this sixteenth-century woodcut, Job's wife urges him to curse God and die.

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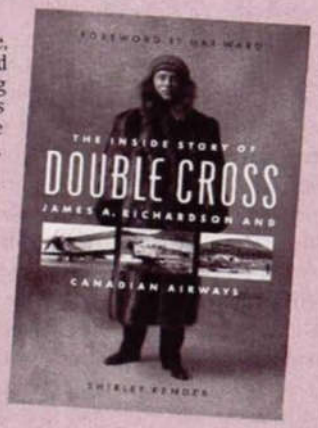

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Slow Train to Nowhere: The Pee-Dee's Half Century

by Bryan Eddington

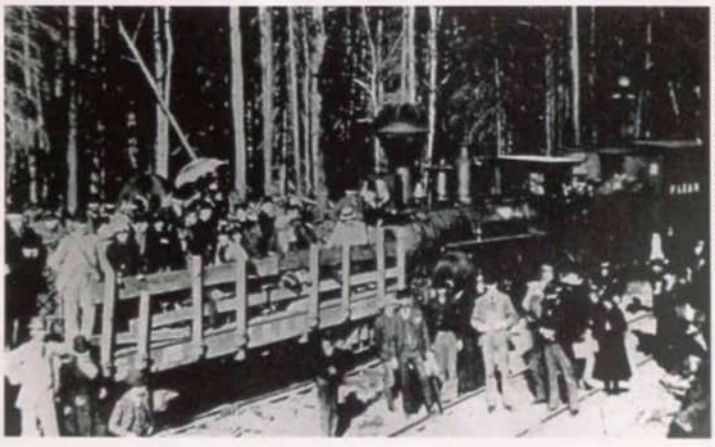
The crew named their first locomotive after the madam of a popular brothel, Black Auntie, and the train it hauled stopped for people to fish or pick berries as it swayed slowly through the northwestern Ontario wilderness to its terminus in the middle of nowhere.

Climb aboard that first train and the most comfort you could expect on your open flatcar would be a locomotive that pushed instead of pulled to protect you from sparks and smoke.

This was the Pee-Dee line that, at the turn of the century, ran from the Port Arthur wharf on Lake Superior 138.7 kilometres southwest into boreal bush.

THUNDER BAY MUSEUM HISTORICAL SOCIETY / 979.35.19

The Pee-Dee (above) decorated by the Ancient Order of Foresters for a picnic in the park at Stanley to mark Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, 1897. The original locomotive, Black Auntie (below), protected passengers from smoke by pushing them on a flatcar, while pulling boxcars.



THUNDER BAY MUSEUM HISTORICAL SOCIETY / 994.1.32

The line went under many names to attract investors, but to its crew and passengers it was always the Pee-Dee—Port Arthur and Duluth Railway.

When its first rail was laid in 1887, the aim was to head through mining country to the U.S. border and join a line coming north from Duluth. But American investors backed out, and the Pee-Dee line was forced to stop in wilderness just north of the border. It did try to slip unnoticed down to American mines, but U.S. officials quickly pushed it back. Then the Canadian mines ran out of ore.

But the Pee-Dee struggled on.

Sometimes, its trains were so slow people claimed a horse and cutter could beat them. One Finnish immigrant found it faster to ski sixty-five kilometres home than wait for a train.

When its old wood-burning locomotive ran out of fuel, passengers climbed down to cut brush. Later,

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as hotels sprang up, they washed dust from their throats while the train waited.

Heavy snow, mudslides, and washouts consistently wrecked timetables. Even caterpillars stopped the trains in 1936 and 1937.

In the early 1900s, if you lived in Port Arthur or its fiercely competitive twin city of Fort William, you could board a church excursion train to the new village of Stanley – named for the fellow who donated the hockey cup. Now you'd be travelling in the comfort of one of fifteen passenger cars carrying more than a thousand people – a quarter of the population of Port Arthur and Fort William. Your canoes and picnic gear would be packed into the baggage cars.

Shout to the engineer and he'd stop the train to allow you to you pick blueberries and mushrooms. If you were adventurous you'd climb onto a horse-hauled wagon and head further west from Stanley to wonder at the spectacle of Kakabeka Falls.

However, if you were looking for a good place to settle when you climbed onto the train in Port Arthur, you'd find good farming land in the Slate River valley amongst the pines and granite. You could build a house, plant vegetables, and soon be part of a tiny settlement served only by the Pee-Dee.

You'd flag down a train to send your produce or sick child to hospital. You'd place orders for supplies knowing they would arrive on the next day's train. During the 1906 typhoid epidemic, you'd help load clear spring water for the people in Fort William.

If you were a single immigrant far from home, you'd pause at Stanley to listen to the stationmaster's daughters and raise a tear as they sang "Home Sweet Home." Then, once the locomotive was fuelled and watered, you'd ride southwest into virgin bush.

With other immigrants who'd been crowding the Port Arthur wharf, you'd be heading for work with lumber companies cutting white and red pine. As a lumberjack, you'd spend all winter knee-deep in snow with bucksaw and broadaxe. But in spring you'd raise a cheer, hang those tools, and board the train for town. In one carriage you'd find an enterprising barber offering haircuts and shaves. And, at the end of a wild week, perhaps with a visit to Black Auntie, most of your winter's wages of more than $700 would be gone. You'd be hung-over and on the Pee-Dee again heading back to work.

One Finnish immigrant found it faster to ski sixty-five kilometres home than wait for a train.

Waist-deep snow often had to be cleared from Pee-Dee tracks to reach logging camps. Here, in the winter of 1915–1916, brakeman Jack Lalonde leans against the stack while logging-camp owner J.T. Freer stand with his hands behind his back. An unknown passenger poses in snow to his waist.

THUNDER BAY MUSEUM HISTORICAL SOCIETY / 974.14.1

One traveller who saw Port Arthur in the spring around 1900 said it was wilder than the Klondike during its gold rush.

The line did become part of Canadian Northern and finally Canadian National Railways, but to its passengers it was always the Pee-Dee. And, for forty-seven years, the Pee-Dee provided access to settlements and camps until finally, in 1938, roads and trucks replaced it.

But even now, tales of the Pee-Dee are still told. Like the one about a young woman who asked if the train could go faster because she was having a baby. "I didn't know you were pregnant," replied an astonished conductor. "I wasn't before I got on," said the woman.

Bryan Eddington is a Thunder Bay writer with a special interest in early Canadian history.

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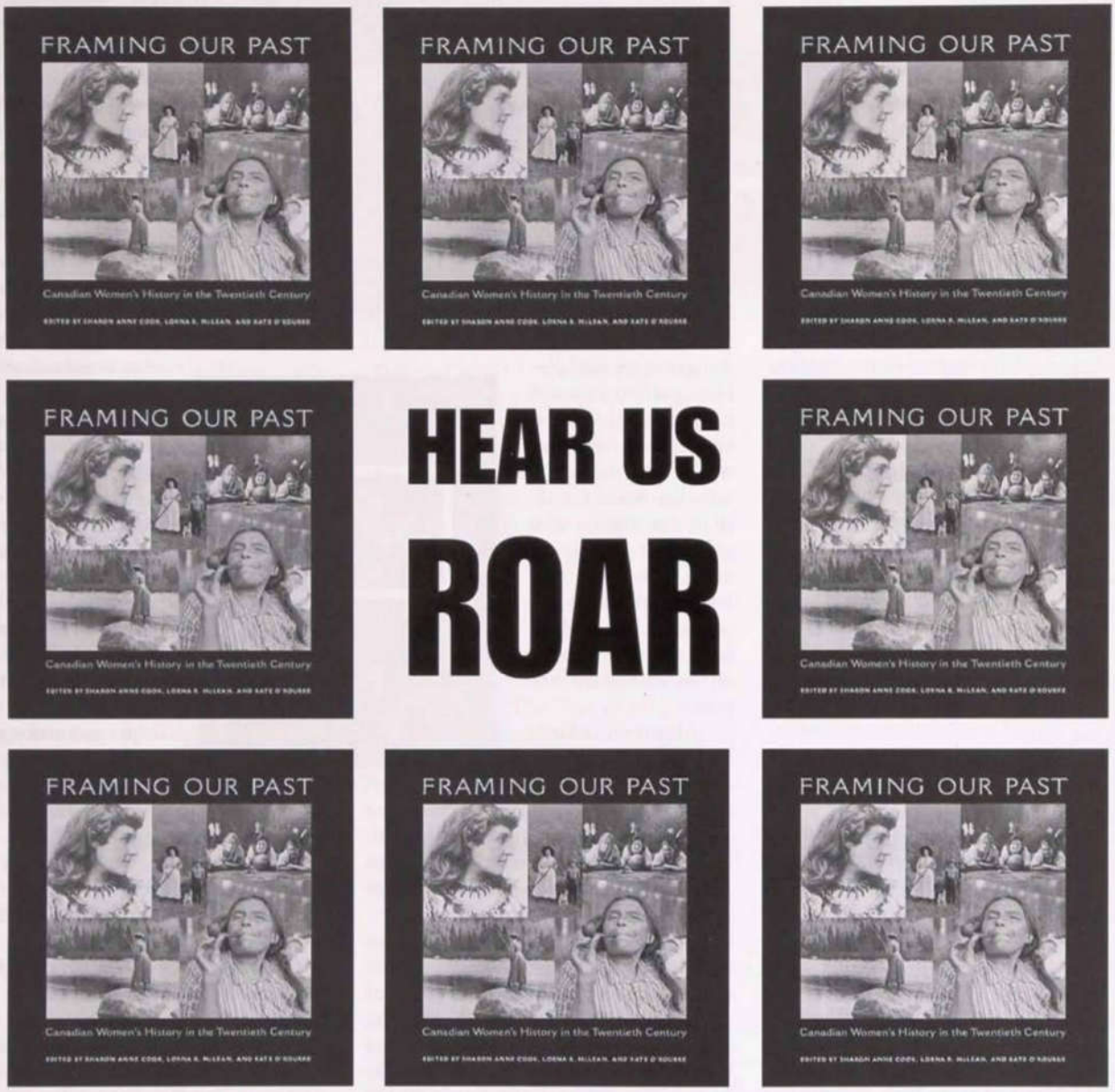

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Reviews

Featured Books

■ **The War Diary of Clare Gass**
Edited by Susan Mann
McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston, 2000
336 pp., $34.95 hardcover

■ **From a Stretcher Handle: The World War I Journal and Poems of Pte. Frank Walker**
Edited by Mary F. Gaudet
Institute of Island Studies, Charlottetown, 2000
144 pp., $15.95 paper

■ **Georges Vanier, Soldier: The Wartime Letters and Diaries, 1915–1919**
Edited by Deborah Cowley
Dundurn Press, Toronto, 2000
240 pp., $32.99 hardcover

■ **Niagara 1814: America Invades Canada**
By Richard V. Barbuto
University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, 2000
416 pp., illus., $US39.95 hardcover

■ **Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading *Chatelaine* Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties**
By Valerie J. Korinek
University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2000
460 pp., illus., $75.00 hardcover; 512 pp., $29.95 paper

■ **Fatal Passage: The Untold Story of John Rae, the Arctic Adventurer Who Discovered the Fate of Franklin**
By Ken McGoogan
Harper Collins, Toronto, 2001
328 pp., illus., $34.00 hardcover

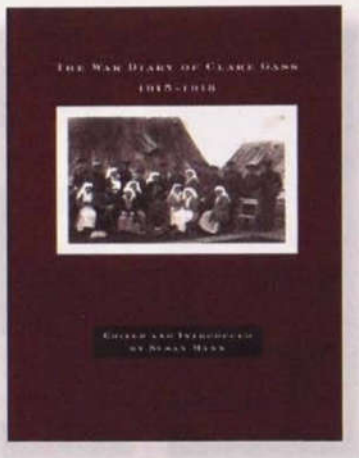
Featured Video

■ **A War of Their Own: The Canadians in Sicily and Italy**
Produced by the War Amps of Canada, Ottawa, 2000
Two parts (each part 57 minutes)
CRTC C-16943, VHS format

In Their Own Words

It is difficult to imagine what life was like for Canadians who served at the front during the First World War. Three new edited collections of diaries, letters, and poems provide glimpses of how a nurse, a stretcher-bearer, and an officer lived.

The War Diary of Clare Gass, edited by noted historian Susan Mann, presents the writings of nurse Clare Gass. Gass volunteered as "a patriotic Canadian, a dutiful daughter, a devout Anglican, a loving sister, a dear friend, an adventurer, a romantic—and a nurse." This private-school-educated daughter of middle-class parents enlisted in 1915 and served through to the end of the war. Part of a small group of Canadian women who offered to nurse overseas, she was near enough the front to witness aerial dogfights and to hear shrapnel fall on her tent.



Mann's collection expands the literature on women's service in the First World War. The introduction provides the reader with an overview of the period and Gass's place in it. Professional historians will appreciate the theoretical observations; casual readers may not. Mann also uncovered information to complement the diary. These findings offer welcome insight into the subject's life, especially since Gass frequently notes what she did, but rarely how she felt. Unfortunately, the details are buried in notes and appendices—only very determined readers will find them. Given the brevity of the diary entries, this information should be in the narrative.

Readers learn of a different experience in Mary F. Gaudet's ***From a Stretcher Handle: The World War I Journal and Poems of Pte. Frank Walker***. Boyde Beck describes the lot of stretcher-bearers in an introductory essay, while Gaudet, Walker's granddaughter, provides an introduction and an epilogue covering Walker's pre- and postwar years.

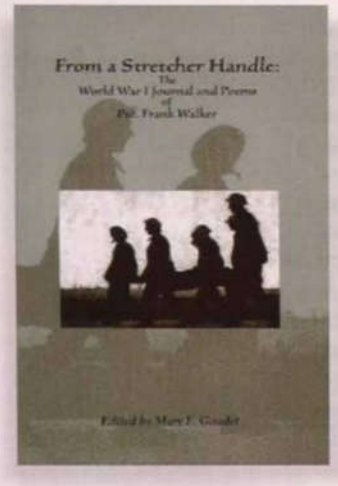
Walker was a twenty-year-old machinist in August 1914 when he enlisted. His greatest fear was missing the chance to serve: "Since the outbreak of war—four long, unendurable days ago—I have been on pins and needles. Will they take me?" His enthusiasm permeates his writing. The reader accompanies Walker on his journey from excited recruit to disillusioned veteran. Gradually, glowing entries about training camp at Valcartier, Quebec, give way to cynicism by 1916. The carnage of the Somme moved Walker to note that "if there's any more fighting to be done on the Somme, they'd better get someone else to do it." Walker was exhausted by the enormity of life at the front. By 1917, his diary entries shrunk and eventually stopped. He noted simply, "My war journal has come to an end."

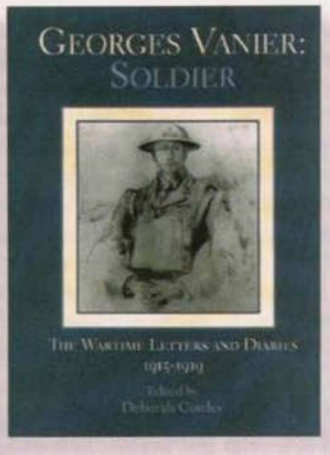
Deborah Cowley's ***Georges Vanier, Soldier*** offers another perspective. Combat officer and future governor general Georges Vanier's wartime diary and letters are wonderfully detailed. The child of a French-Canadian father and an Irish mother, Vanier offers an unusual perspective. When war broke out, Vanier was a promising young lawyer, but he could not let the chance to serve pass. In October 1914, he was commissioned a lieutenant in the Twenty-Second Regiment. He survived years at the front, eventually becoming acting commander. While serving in the latter capacity, he was badly wounded in August 1918. The wound cost him his leg, but it did not shake his commitment to the cause. Even during a painful convalescence, Vanier continued to write to friends and to record his feelings in his diary. Throughout his correspondence, Vanier related "the state of my soul and my morale under fire." Detailed descriptions and observations offer a rich landscape for the reader to traverse. Readers will mourn along with Vanier at the loss of comrades, and empathize with him when a German

shell nearly ends his life.

Cowley constructs a carefully crafted backdrop. Her unobtrusive marginal notes and brief editorial comments provide necessary detail, but they do not detract from the power of Vanier's words. Readers will be swept along by Vanier's pride for his battalion, and his love for French Canada.

At first glance, these three books appear very different, their main characters distinguished by such notable things as gender, family background, education, rank, religion, language, and employment. However, after getting acquainted with Clare Gass, Frank Walker, and Georges Vanier, readers will be struck by the similarities of their wartime experiences. All three were skilled workers with their whole lives ahead of them. Patriotism moved them to enlist, not unemployment. All three were eager to serve, but were loath to part with family. Each of them wanted to return home, but would not dream of deserting their comrades. They gloried in the cause, but were appalled by its cost.





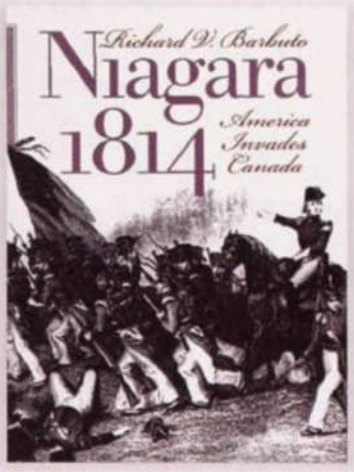
Reviewed by **Ian Miller** who is a graduate of the Tri-University doctoral program in history.

Then Conquer We Must

On July 3, 1814, Major-General Jacob Brown led the United States Army across the border from Buffalo into Canada to capture Fort Erie. He then marched north to defeat the British at Chippawa on July 5. Brown next advanced to Queenston to await the arrival of the U.S. Lake Ontario squadron to help him drive the British out of their defences at the mouth of the Niagara River. If successful, he planned to advance east to Burlington, York, or even Kingston to bolster the efforts of American diplomats to negotiate the annexation of Upper Canada. (By 1814, earlier U.S. hopes of conquering all of British North America had faded after two years of military failure and the impending arrival of significant British reinforcements from Europe.)

The navy did not show up, and lacking the heavy artillery and other assistance he expected from the squadron, Jacob Brown withdrew south. The British pursued, and the two armies met in a bloody action at Lundy's Lane on July 25, following which Brown's badly mauled force retreated to Fort Erie to endure a siege. After continued sanguinary campaigning over the next three months, the Americans retired to their side of the Niagara River. The War of 1812 ended shortly afterwards with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent. The main outcome of the conflict was that Canada survived to continue its distinct evolution apart from the United States, despite America's efforts to absorb it into the otherwise expanding republic.

As a young West Point cadet in the 1960s, Richard V. Barbuto wondered why the best army the Americans put into the field during the war failed to achieve its mission. Years later, as a retired lieutenant-colonel pursuing his Ph.D., he explored that question in his doctoral dissertation, which he subsequently transformed into ***Niagara 1814: America Invades Canada***. In this detailed campaign history, supported by a long overview of events leading up to the dramatic summer of 1814, Barbuto concluded that the Americans were never able to concentrate their overwhelming resources well enough to achieve success. Without overlooking the failings of U.S. field commanders and the competence of the British defenders, he asserts that the blame rested primarily with President James Madison. In one of his many blunders, the president ordered a futile attack against the British in the upper Great Lakes, which deprived Brown of desperately needed troops as well as use of the American Lake Erie squadron. In another instance, Madison did not provide clear direction to the commodore of the Lake Ontario squadron to support the army, which allowed him to pursue naval objectives at the expense of the overall war effort.



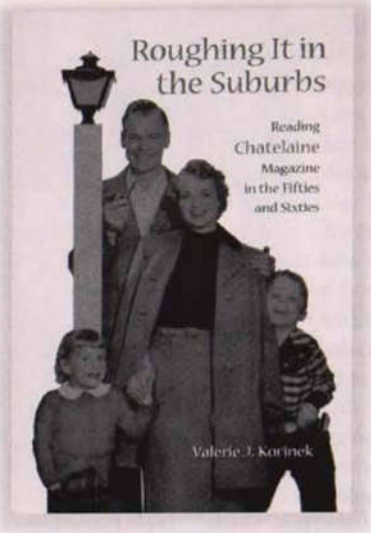
Barbuto largely retells a familiar story, but diverges from other authors in many of the secondary themes he examines. His main interests focus on organizing and executing the campaign, but he also picks up other under-explored topics, such as the engagements that took place between British and American forces at Cook's Mills and elsewhere in October 1814. Most general readers, however, likely would find the emphasis on logistical and similar concerns to be a bit too specialized for their interests. A better bet for anyone in search of a broad military history of the conflict is J.M. Hitsman's *Incredible War of 1812*, recently revised by Donald Graves. For the events of 1814 in particular, Graves's nicely crafted *Where Right and Glory Lead: The Battle of Lundy's Lane* tells an equally scholarly, but more concise and exciting story than does *Niagara 1814*. Nevetheless, Richard Barbuto's distinct emphases and narrative thrust are worthy of the attention of specialists and enthusiasts of the war, while

armchair historians attracted to the fine points of military campaigning probably will appreciate this American-centred study as well.

Reviewed by **Carl Benn**, chief curator with the City of Toronto Museums and Heritage Services and writer of *The Iroquois in the War of 1812*, published by University of Toronto Press.

Magazine for Moderns

Like many Canadian girls, I grew up reading *Chatelaine* magazine because my mother subscribed to it. The *Chatelaine* I paged through in the 1970s bore little resemblance to the fiery magazine of the 1950s and 1960s, profiled by Valerie Korinek in ***Roughing It in the Suburbs***. In her book, Korinek sets out to persuade readers that this seemingly mild-mannered Canadian women's magazine "played a unique role in cultivating a mass market for second-wave feminist ideas, worked as a champion for women (lobbying for the Status of Women commission), and educated readers about the discriminatory nature of Canadian society."

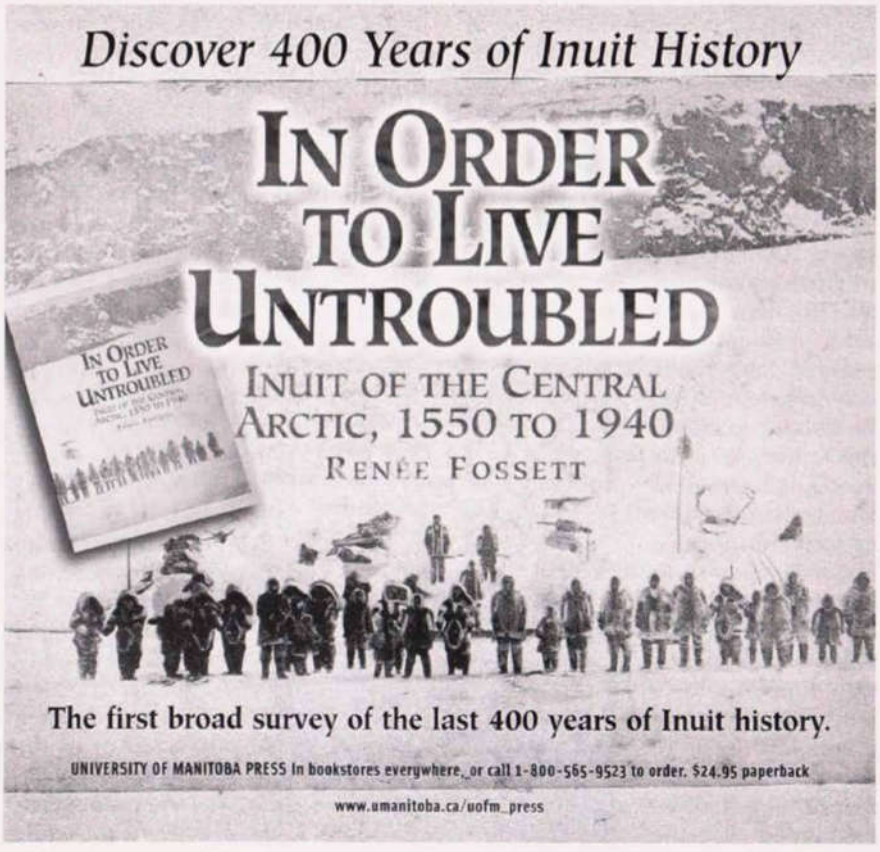


In the postwar years, *Chatelaine* was the venerable doyenne of Canadian women's magazines. Launched in 1938 with a print run of 60,000, it grew quickly. By the end of the 1950s, it was estimated that one in three English-speaking Canadian women read *Chatelaine* every month. By the end of the 1960s, *Chatelaine* had a circulation of 980,000 plus newsstand sales of 70,000, reaching 51 percent of the female population. Costing between $1.50 and $2.00 per year, averaging 90 to 110 pages per issue, the magazine offered a wildly mixed bag to readers. It was, as Korinek puts it, a "polysemic product – a magazine that contained a variety of messages and meanings for its readers."

Advertising was always around 50 percent of the magazine, and feature articles made up about 15 percent of the content, with the remainder consisting of humour, fiction, editorials, and service department coverage (recipes, homemaking, crafts, and other domestic pursuits.) It is on the strength of the articles and editorials that Korinek draws her conclusion that *Chatelaine* is owed a spot in the history of second-wave feminism in Canada. "One of the fundamental credos of many *Chatelaine* feature articles and editorials," she writes "is that there was life beyond dishpan hands and ennui." *Chatelaine*'s stable of writers addressed issues such as divorce, abortion, sexuality, feminism, women's employment, poverty, and race relations among others.

Korinek argues that during *Chatelaine*'s heyday, the magazine created a community of readers, writers, and editors that transgressed and largely subverted traditional messages. She concludes, for example, from published letters to the editor and archived communications, that readers were "highly resistant ... ready to teach others to read critically and not accept the advice of the 'experts' as gospel." Korinek draws on content analysis and cultural-studies theory to see subversion where others were content to see a conventional magazine.

This perspective is a useful corrective to the idea that readers are merely sheep, but I suspect it overstates the case. I'm not persuaded, for example, that departmental editors were really subversively aiding readers and challenging marketing imperatives when they tailored articles to modest budgets. Nor am I convinced that the jocular letter to the editor by Mrs. Beatrice Maitland of Chatham, N.B., nominating herself for the fictitious Mrs. Slob 1961 contest, really counteracted the real Mrs. Chatelaine contest and its valorization of the housewife.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Likewise, I wish Korinek had paid more attention to the larger environment of the magazine. She largely dismisses the role of advertisers and the parent company, arguing that their "image of the magazine as a profit generator and as a vehicle for advertisers was not strong enough to overpower the agenda of the female editors and writers or to negate the readers' power." In light of the fiscal realities of publishing, the ascription of power to editors, readers, and writers seems unwarranted. Ads, after all, were more than half the magazine's content. And the bottom line was what determined change of editors or overhaul of the magazine. From 1955 to 1960, net advertising revenue accounted for 77 percent of *Chatelaine*'s total revenue, and the magazine was the lone strong showing in a stable of poorly performing Maclean Hunter consumer magazines. Had the magazine's bottom line been different, the power of female editors and readers might easily have been erased by owners.

The book's cover is taken from the special issue of March 1955, on "How to live in the suburbs." Replete with articles such as "Is the coffee party a menace or a must?", "You can't cook without a freezer shelf," and "There's a problem child next door," the special issue no doubt can be read, as Korinek does, as highlighting the gendered tensions at work in the idealized suburban consumer society. Some of the content did provide an audience of mass readers with trenchant feminist critique – years before Betty Friedan.

The book is a highly readable, close interrogation of the magazine, and, much like *Chatelaine*, which functioned as a "faithful friend and tonic" for the readers who curled up with it, Korinek's book is also a pleasure – even as it elects to make overlarge claims for the role of the magazine.

Reviewed by **Susan Prentice**, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Manitoba who specializes in family issues.

Fatal Franklin Frankness

Dr. John Rae, at various times surgeon, clerk, chief trader, and chief factor with the Hudson's Bay Company, was arguably the most cost-efficient and impressively successful Arctic explorer of any period in history. Travelling with small parties of men and largely living off the land, in a series of four expeditions (1846–47, 1847–49, 1850–51, and 1853–54), he explored and mapped the Arctic mainland coast from the west coast of Melville Peninsula to the west coast of Boothia Peninsula, including Committee and Pelly Bays, as well as most of the southwest, south, and east coasts of Victoria Island. In so doing he established that Boothia is indeed a peninsula and not an island (as had been thought) and most importantly, that King William Island was an island and not a peninsula attached to Boothia Peninsula to the east (as had been erroneously mapped by Sir John Ross).

But his real claims to fame were twofold. He brought the first news (based on Inuit reports, substantiated by identifiable relics purchased from

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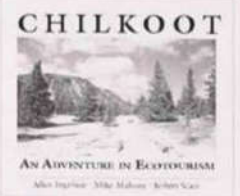

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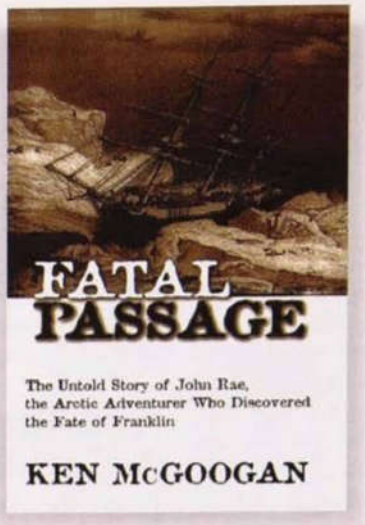
the Inuit in the spring and summer of 1854) that all members of the missing Franklin expedition had died, probably in the area of King William Island. And, by establishing in the spring of 1854 that King William Island was separated from Boothia by Rae Strait, he discovered the final link in a navigable Northwest Passage.

Fatal Passage, Ken McGoogan's biography of Rae, describes his explorations and the above claims to fame (and much else) in considerable detail. Several chapters are devoted to the theme that Franklin's widow, Lady Franklin, incensed by Rae's revelation of the Inuit reports (later verified) that members of the Franklin expedition had resorted to cannibalism, waged a prolonged and unscrupulous campaign to ensure that Rae did not receive proper recognition for discovering the fate of her husband's expedition, or for finding the Northwest Passage.

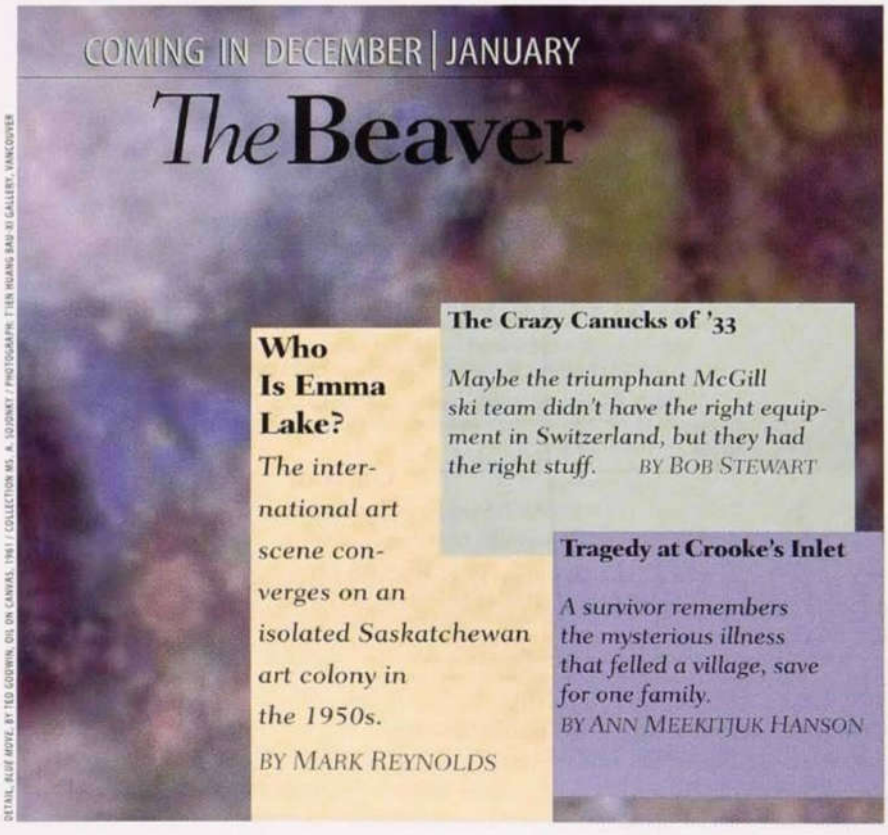
This biography is billed as a work of "creative non-fiction," i.e., the narrative is embellished with descriptions of locations and with recreated dialogues. In most cases, such as Rae's confrontation with Lady Franklin after his references to cannibalism appeared in *The Times*, the technique is quite effective. But a gaffe such as the reference to the "countless stone walls rolling away into the wooded distance" as Rae travelled across Kent to London, as if Kent (a hedgerow county, with not a stone wall in sight) looked like the Yorkshire Dales, introduces a jarring note.



Generally, however, the biography reads well and all the major events in Rae's career are reported accurately. But this is unfortunately not the case when it comes to the detail. Disturbing is McGoogan's consistent reference (on at least eight occasions) to Chief Factor Peter Dease as William Dease. On page 39 Thomas Simpson is described as George Simpson's nephew; they were cousins. On page 158 Captain William Kennedy is described as having been born in Red River; he was born in Cumberland House (now in Saskatchewan). Thomas Mistegan was Ojibwa, not Cree. Captain Sir Edward Belcher was court-martialed for abandoning four ships in the Arctic at Sheerness in October 1854; McGoogan states that he "barely escaped court martial." Finally McGoogan suffers from the all-too-common affliction of equating "north" with "up" and "south" with "down," a product of the totally irrational convention of placing north at the top of a map. Thus, on page 50, we are told that when travelling from Norway House to York Factory, Rae followed the impossible route of "up the Nelson and down the Hayes." He might conceivably have travelled down the Nelson, round Point of Marsh, and a short distance up the Hayes estuary to York Factory. But Rae followed the usual fur-trade route from Playgreen Lake up the Echimamish, over the portage, and down the Hayes; the Nelson River was rarely travelled as being too dangerous.

Could it be that McGoogan and his editor believe that by adopting the designation "creative non-fiction" they have awarded themselves a licence to rewrite the facts of history? John Rae deserves better.

Reviewed by **William Barr**, a research associate with the Arctic Institute of North America at the University of Calgary.


COMING IN DECEMBER | JANUARY
The Beaver
Who Is Emma Lake?
The international art scene converges on an isolated Saskatchewan art colony in the 1950s.
BY MARK REYNOLDS
The Crazy Canucks of '33
Maybe the triumphant McGill ski team didn't have the right equipment in Switzerland, but they had the right stuff.
BY BOB STEWART
Tragedy at Crooke's Inlet
A survivor remembers the mysterious illness that felled a village, save for one family.
BY ANN MEEKITJUK HANSON
DETAIL, BLUE MOVE, BY TED GODWIN, OIL ON CANVAS, 1961 / COLLECTION MS. A. SOJONKY / PHOTOGRAPH: TIEN HOANG BAU © GALLERY, VANCOUVER

Soldati Canadesi in Italia

As part of its Never Again! military heritage video series, the War Amps of Canada released a two-part production in late 2000 that examines the impressive efforts of the 93,000 Canadian soldiers and nursing sisters who served in the Italian campaign during the Second World War. Called ***A War of Their***

Own, each part runs just under an hour. Part I, entitled *Sicily to Ortona*, was released in November 2000, just in time for Remembrance Day, and aired on Global, the Prime specialty channel, and community cable stations across Canada. Part II, called the *D-Day Dodgers*, was issued in mid-December.

The Canadians landed in Sicily on July 10, 1943. Fighting in a hot, dusty, and inhospitable place, they quickly swept through the island, then crossed the Messina Strait and continued up the boot of Italy. During almost two years of steady combat, the Canadians developed innovative methods of fighting against an experienced enemy force. The Germans referred to the Canadians as the "red-patch devils" for their tenacious fighting spirit and the red-patch triangle sewn on the sleeve of their uniforms.

A War of Their Own effectively juxtaposes the account contained in letters written home by a young British Columbia medical officer with events unfolding on the battlefield. Written, researched, and narrated by War Amps chief executive officer Cliff Chadderton, *A War of Their Own* includes excellent archival footage by the Canadian Army Film Unit and clearly identifies which regiments participated in each battle. The video also makes effective use of maps and still photographs. It was produced in-house, and the War Amps should be commended for their efforts and talents. But, as a consequence of being an internal production, *A War of Their Own* suffers.

An outside production company would have provided additional polish, professionalism, and perspective. At times, *A War of Their Own* lacks intensity and appears to be merely cataloguing one battle after another. Important elements of the Italian campaign are either marginalized or ignored. While admittedly the focus is on the Canadian fighting, there is no discussion of the role of the Italian partisans and army, who joined the Allied side after the fall of Mussolini in 1943. It only makes passing reference to the brutality inflicted on the civilian population following German occupation. Nor does this presentation put the Canadian action into proper historical perspective. The Canadians were part of the famous British Eighth Army, but they are treated largely in isolation. Little is revealed about the British effort, and the American contribution is also largely overlooked. In reality, it was not a war of their own, and Canada's contribution could have been better examined within the context of the entire multinational action in Italy.

The concluding minutes of *A War of Their Own* are probably its best. They reveal that Canadian casualties were high (nearly 6,000 killed and another 20,500 wounded or captured), but justify this heavy toll by stressing the importance of the Italian offensive for the Allied war effort. Canada's participation was also significant for nation building at home, where it was front-page news for a year. Troops from all regions of the country fought together as a distinct force and managed to hold down some twenty Nazi divisions that would otherwise have been deployed at Normandy or on the eastern front.

A War of Their Own reminds us once again that Canada played a vital role in the war. Success on the field, particularly at the bloody battle of Ortona, gave Canada the experience and confidence it needed to participate effectively in the 1944 invasion of France and to contribute to the final liberation of western Europe. The troops in Italy were hardly D-Day dodgers, as the second part of the presentation acknowledges. They were, in fact, D-Day primers.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, a greater appreciation of Canada's sacrifice during the war should be achieved with the release of this video. And this, in the final analysis, is the whole *raison d'être* behind the Never Again! series. Funded by corporate donations, *A War of Their Own* is available on loan from the War Amps free of charge or can be purchased at its cost-recovery price of $14.

Reviewed by Ottawa lawyer **Gavin Murphy**.

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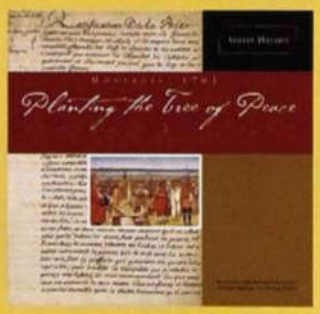

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CHRIS RAIBLE

Booknotes

"A Canadian settler hates a tree, regards it as his natural enemy, as something to be destroyed, eradicated, annihilated by all and any means." Such was the sentiment, according to Anna Jameson, in 1836. It was some years before cutting trees became a profit-making industry. Canadian "hewers of wood" began turning trees into timber and made millions by selling it, mostly to the Americans. Almost from the beginning of industrial lumbering, its workers had to fight for a fairer share of the profits produced by their labours. To unionize the woodworkers in Canada was a prolonged battle, as a recent history of the IWA (Industrial Workers of America) fully recounts. Born in the Depression, the IWA was the child of radical, even violent forebears, including the militant "wobblies" of the IWW. Accused of being communists (often correctly), early union organizers sought to create a single labour organization strong enough to change the whole capitalist system. The times were tough, the owners were firm, critics were many, and the government was unsympathetic, even hostile. Idealistic union leaders may have wanted to create a better world, but most of the men in the forests and lumber mills simply wanted better working conditions and better pay. The union's history, *The IWA in Canada*, is a fascinating read – it would be a stirring tale, were not the battles so gruelling. Its members fought to save their union by getting rid of the communists and, later, by separating from the Americans. They also fought to save jobs threatened by the novel technologies of industrialists and, later, by the moral ideologies of environmentalists. The books is a well-written, wonderfully illustrated work – almost a coffee-table book in format – but it does not tell a pretty story.

The unions receive little attention in another fascinating study of logging, *Island Timber*. Telling of the rise, the development, and the ultimate demise of a single firm, the Comox Logging Company, the book describes old-growth log cutting on the east coast of Vancouver Island. Drawing on hundreds of interviews as well as years of reading and research, local historian Richard Somerset Mackie presents, in a sense, two histories. One describes the *how* of logging: identifying stands of trees, dividing each area into quarters, constructing railway lines with the mechanical power of shovels and the manual labor of men, plotting the order of cutting, felling the giant trees, skidding the logs, loading onto rail cars, unloading at waters edge, rafting log booms through the Straight of Georgia, and ultimately reaching the mills at New Westminster. Word, diagram, map, and photograph – hundreds of them – make the whole process marvellously clear. The other history is of the *who*, the workers in logging. We are personally introduced to dozens of men employed as surveyors, fallers, buckers, saw filers, scalers, riggers, and all the other skilled and specialized occupations essential to the whole process. Their memories are quoted; their anecdotal stories, sad and glad, are related. For more than forty years the wood was cut – millions upon millions of board feet, enough to build twenty thousand houses a year – and then, almost suddenly, it was all gone, leaving behind a terrible tangle of log and branch and brush, tinder for a major fire in 1938. One reads the history of this massive operation with awe and admiration – also with anguish and some anger. Back then, perhaps, men knew no better. Now their story is very well told.

A very different British Columbia industry, but one almost as impressive, is chronicled in *Ships of Steel*, the history of a single family enterprise, named, eventually, Allied Shipbuilders. The earliest ships built in the province, late in the nineteenth century, were of wood – the first steel steamers used on the B.C. coast were built in Scotland, knocked down, shipped, and reconstructed in Vancouver. World War I prompted the construction of yards to build oceangoing steel tonnage and into that promising opportunity stepped W.D. McLaren. He became patriarch of the family whose personal story as well as whose industrial history this book recounts. Over the course of half a century, the McLarens built steel ships for wartime and peacetime purposes, built cargo ships and coastal cruisers, ferries for inland rivers and ferries for saltwater service, tugs and barges intended for work along the coast or designed to endure arctic hardships, fishing vessels, and ships for oceanic surveys. They all are described in word and diagram and photograph. An appendix catalogues each one Allied built: its type, size, power, designer, purchaser, and more.

Moving cargo in wintry conditions – in this case over land – is the subject of *Trucking North: On Canada's Mackenzie Highway*. Begun as a winter road only in the late 1930s, the Mackenzie Highway was officially completed as a year-round road in 1948. It was the route from Grimshaw to Fort Good Hope, used by trucks carrying supplies to northern mines. Traffic increased because of Cold War defences and oil and gas discoveries. Roberta Hursey takes us on a 1,500-kilometre journey, describing the territory and its history, and the history of the highway itself, "officially" opened in 1998, fifty years after its completion. The journey is noisy and cold and quite amazing. If a book can make one feel romantic about big trucks in rough conditions, it is this one.

Ours is a country with remarkable bridges. One of them, the Quebec Bridge, built so that trains could cross the St. Lawrence, was an engineering marvel and a human tragedy. Proposals

Books Cited

- *The IWA in Canada: The Life and Times of an Industrial Union.* By Andrew Newfeld and Andrew Parnaby. IWA Canada / New Star Books, 2000. $50.00 hardcover.
- *Island Timber.* By Richard Somerset Mackie. Sono Nis Press, 2000. $39.95 paper.
- *Ships of Steel: A British Columbia Shipbuilder's Story.* By T.A. McLaren & Vickie Jenson. Harbour Publishing, 2000. $39.95 hardcover.
- *Trucking North: On Canada's Mackenzie Highway.* By Roberta L. Hursey. Temeron Books, 2000. $34.95 paper.
- *The Bridge at Québec.* By William D. Middleton. Indiana University Press, 2001. US$39.95 hardcover.

for such a structure were first put forth in the 1850s (including one by the Roebling firm, builders of a suspension bridge across the Niagara and later the Brooklyn Bridge), but construction did not begin for half a century. *The Bridge at Québec* relates this whole history of planning, financing, organizing, and finally building the bridge. Architectural and structural difficulties are clearly explained as are the human errors and omissions that brought two major disasters and cost nearly a hundred lives (many of them Caughnawaga native people). At last, in 1917 the (totally redesigned) structure was completed. Railway and bridge buffs alike will especially treasure this volume, complete with splendid photographs, architectural drawings, and appendices filled with technical specifications. Congratulations to the American publisher, Indiana University Press, for publishing a book about a great Canadian achievement.

More Books Worth Noting

- *Atlantic Canada: A Region in the Making*
  By Margaret R. Conrad and James K. Hiller. Oxford University Press, 2001. $34.95 paper.
  The third volume in a projected six-volume history of Canada – lucid, lovely, and literate.

- *The Franklin Conspiracy: Cover-up, Betrayal, and the Astonishing Secret Behind the Lost Arctic Expedition*
  By Jeffrey Blair Latta. Dundurn, 2001. $22.90 paper.
  A fanciful recounting of the Franklin mystery, offering explanations both extraterrestrial and supernatural – long on conspiracy, short on history.

- *"Made Up to a Standard": Thomas Alexander Russell and the Russell Motor Car Company*
  By Jaroslav Petryshyn. General Store Publishing House, 2001. $24.95 paper.
  A neatly done exercise in nostalgia and pipe dreaming – to think that a Canadian-made car might maybe have competed in the same class as the Cadillac, Daimler, and Rolls-Royce – fine photographs and solid research.

- *Montreal of Yesterday: Jewish Life in Montreal 1900–1920*
  By Israel Medres. Véhicule Press, 2000. $19.95 paper.
  Originally written in Yiddish, this stroll through the streets of Montreal has now been translated into English and will charm all who have connections with that unique urban world.

- *My Childhood in the Bush: Growing up in Brent on the CNR in Algonquin Provincial Park (1913–1919)*
  By Rebecca Atkins with Paul and Doug Mackey. Past Forward Heritage Ltd., 2001. $12.95 paper.
  A true story written for younger readers – nicely written, attractively designed, and wonderfully illustrated with archival photos.

- *My Real Name is Charley: Memoirs of a Grocer's Clerk*
  By Glen Hancock. Gaspereau Press, 2000. $19.95 paper.
  One man's memories of growing up in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

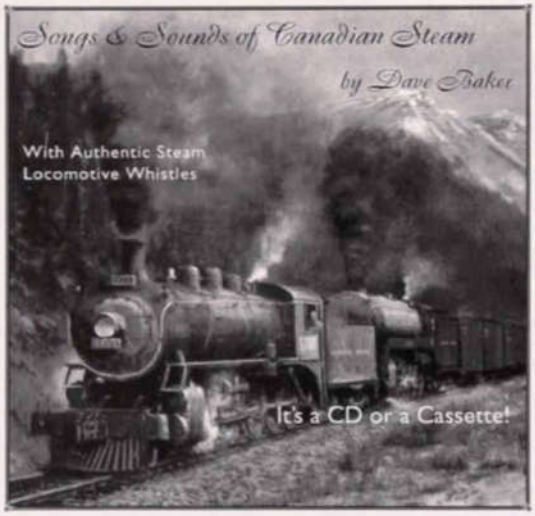
- *Naming Canada: Stories About Canadian Place Names, Revised and Expanded edition*
  By Alan Rayburn. University of Toronto Press, 2001. $60.00 cloth; $24.95 paper.
  Nobody knows the how and why of Canadians giving names to communities and geographies the way Alan Rayburn does, nor does anybody write about them so well.

- *The Road to the Rapids: Nineteenth-Century Church and Society at St. Andrew's Parish, Red River*
  By Robert J. Coutts. University of Calgary Press, 2000. $24.95 paper.
  Central to the Red River settlement was its Anglican parish – this thoughtful study is as much social and political as it is religious.

- *Remember Kirkland Lake: The Gold Miners' Strike of 1941–42, Revised edition*
  By Laurel Sefton MacDowell. Canadian Scholars' Press, 2001. $29.95 paper.

continued

Canadian Railway History In Song!



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In 1941 a Kirkland Lake strike deeply divided the community, for gold mining was essential to the town's economic existence – the story of that strike is here clearly recounted and carefully analyzed.

- *Saint-Anne-de-Bellevue, Heritage Town: An Architect's Perspective*
  By John Bland. Shoreline, 2000. $9.95 paper.
  Short, simple, clear and attractive – a model for any little town which cherishes its heritage.

- *Sentimental Journey: An Oral History of Train Travel in Canada*
  By Ted Ferguson. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2001. $17.95 paper.
  As the title of this book suggests, train travel today (except, perhaps, between big cities) may be an exercise in nostalgia. But these recorded memories are an apt reminder of how central it was to the life of our country.

- *Sharing the Good Times: A History of Prairie Women's Joys and Pleasures*
  By Faye Reineberg Holt. Detseleg Enterprises, 2000. $34.95 paper.
  Ample evidence that for women, even on the Canadian prairies, the old days often were good old days.

- *Sunrise Over Pangnirtung: The Story of Otto Schaefer, M.D.*
  By Gerald W. Hankins, M.D. Arctic Institute of North America, 2000. $19.95 paper.
  German born and trained, "Luttakula" (dear little doctor) spent more than three decades bringing health care to the people of the Arctic – the author's third medical biography.

- *Uncertain Justice: Canadian Women and Capital Punishment 1754–1953*
  By F. Murray Greenwood and Beverley Boissery. Dundurn Press for the Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 2000. $22.99 paper.
  Women both wronged and wrong-doers, all of whom might have been hanged and many of whom were – a sensitive, sympathetic, and nonetheless scholarly study.

- *Under Sydenham Skies: A Celebration of Country Life*
  By Cornelia Johanna Baines. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2001. $28.95 paper.
  Purchase an old farmhouse in central Ontario and who knows what and where your reflections and researches into its past will lead you – nicely written and neatly produced.

- *The Viking Discovery of America: The Excavation of a Norse Settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows Newfoundland*
  By Helge Ingstad and Anne Stine Ingstad. Breakwater Books, 2001. $34.95 cloth.
  The saga of Viking settlement and the story of archaeological discoveries combine in a book filled with maps, diagrams, sketches, and photographs – the authors' years of research ultimately proved that Vikings were the first Europeans in North America.

Governor General's Award Finalists

Canada's National History Society is pleased to announce the selection of the following teachers as finalists in the 2001 competition for the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian history:

Richard Beardsley, Cambie Secondary School, Richmond, BC
Janet Beaver, Forest Valley School, North York, ON
Mel Greif, Humberside Collegiate, Toronto, ON
Rick Homan, Lethbridge Collegiate, Lethbridge, AB
Exposition Sciences Humaines, Ecole Beaulieu, St-Jean-Sur-Richelie, QC
Jean Léger, Polyvante Deux-Montagnes, Deux-Montagnes, QC
Ken MacDonald, Riverside Elementary School, Albert Bridge, NS
Gina McMurchy-Barber, Roots & Wings Montessori School, Surrey, BC
Dalia M. Naujokaitis, St. Elizabeth School, Ottawa, ON
Diane Rodewoldt, Princeton Secondary School, Princeton, BC
Dean Stevens, St. Anne School, Fort McMurray, AB
Jackie Underhill and Kathy Farrell, S. Bruce Smith School, Edmonton, AB

Finalists will be flown to Ottawa to attend an October 13 ceremony, hosted by Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, who will announce the recipient of the award.

The Governor General's Award was established in 1995 to honour the best history teachers in the country. The program is offered with the generous help of the **Hudson's Bay History Foundation, Bell Canada, Investors Group** and a number of individual donors whose support is gratefully acknowledged.

The finalists were selected from among the entries received for the 2001 competition by a judging panel of educators.

Judges and others associated with the Governor General's Award program took time out from their deliberations to assemble on the steps of the Ontario Historical Association offices, Toronto. Front row, left to right: Jeffrey Mitchell, CoEd Communications; Pat Hanson, judge, Regina; Jane Whittington and Lisa Kelly, CoEd Communicatons. Back row, left to right: Yves Frenette, judge, Ontario; Richard Blaquière, judge, New Brunswick; Thora Bajard, judge, B.C; Jean-Claude Richard, judge, Quebec; Renée Gillis, judge, Manitoba; Laird Rankin, CNHS executive director.

Better Governance

Following a review of the Society's governance structure earlier this year, the first since the Society was established in 1994, a separate officer position of chair of the board was created, to be elected annually from among the members of the board of directors. E. James Arnett, Q.C., of Toronto, was elected the Society's first board chair. At the same meeting, Joseph E. Martin, also of

E. James Arnett, Q.C.

Joseph E. Martin

Toronto, was reelected president of the Society. Previously Mr. Martin served as both president and chair.

Under the new governance structure, Mr. Martin will be able to devote more time to Society fundraising activities and operational matters. Mr. Arnett will chair and set the agenda for board and annual meetings, represent the Society as required, and accept any additional duties as might be agreed from time to time with the president.

Honour Restructured

Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada,has approved the Society's request to restructure the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History.

The new arrangement will replace the present two-tier system, of one recipient and eleven finalists, with an all-recipient format. The restructuring will also align the program with others under the governor general's aegis. Effective with the 2002 competition, each of six recipients will receive a cash prize of $1,000, with the school of each receiving an equivalent sum.

Keeping It Up

Many Canadian magazines are struggling to raise circulation levels, but the *Beaver* is not one of them. According to the Canadian Circulations Audit Board (CCAB), an agency responsible for auditing the readership of Canadian magazines, the *Beaver* increased its readership by 9.3 per cent between September 1999 and September 2000, putting it at number 6 in the CCAB's Top 10 Gains list for that period. The *Beaver* currently has over 47,000 subscribers.

Dining Out

To create awareness of its work and to thank those who have financially supported its activities, the Society has recently held a number of dinners.

In Winnipeg last May, the Society tested the concept of a paid event. *Beaver* subscribers in Manitoba were invited to purchase tickets to a dinner in the historic Fort Garry Hotel that featured Gene Allen, senior producer and director of research for *Canada, A People's History*. Mr. Allen gave a behind-the-scenes account of the making of the popular CBC series and showed excerpts from broadcasts that will be aired this fall. The event was a sellout. A similar event is planned for Toronto in November.

Society president Joe Martin hosted dinners for donors in Peterborough and London, Ontario, in June, and Halifax and St. John's, in September. Thanks to Tom Symons, Judith Fingard, and Patricia O'Brien for their help with the functions in Peterborough, Halifax, and St. John's respectively. More dinners are being planned for 2002 ... so don't order in.

Canada's National History Society

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Museum Profile

Located in the heart of downtown Montreal, the **McCord Museum** is the leading museum of Canadian history, and one of the finest historical institutions in North America. Home of five remarkable collections – First Nations, costume and textiles, decorative arts, the Notman photographic archives, and a collection of paintings, prints and drawings – the McCord's nearly one million objects bring Canadian history to life.

Most of the collection covers the period from 1800 to 1945, an era that saw many changes, including Victorian Montreal's accession to the role of Canada's metropolis, the development of an urban culture, and the transformation of family and social values. But the collection also spreads beyond these years, enabling the museum to provide insight into all the important stages in Canada's history.

The McCord's permanent exhibition SIMPLY MONTRÉAL: GLIMPSES OF A UNIQUE CITY features more than 800 objects from the McCord collection, and plunges visitors from around the globe into the heart of the Montreal experience.

Also at the McCord this fall and winter are MOLIÈRE IN THE NEW WORLD, a celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Montreal's Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, which will delight theatre lovers and history buffs alike, and FULL CIRCLE: FIRST CONTACT, VIKINGS AND SKRAELINGS IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR, a travelling exhibition from the Newfoundland Museum, which examines the first contact in the year 1000 between the Vikings and native peoples in the Atlantic and Maritime regions.

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- Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, Winnipeg
- Dalnavert Museum, Winnipeg
- Western Canada Aviation Museum, Winnipeg
- McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal
- Pointe à Callière, Musée d'archéologie et d'histoire de Montréal
- Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, QC
- New Brunswick Museum, Saint John
- Yarmouth County Museum, Yarmouth, NS

A discount of at least 10 percent on regular admission will be given upon presentation of your membership card. Some restrictions may apply. All subscribers to the *Beaver* are automatically members of the Society.

CHRISTOPHER **Moore**

Nickle for a Title?

Can a Canadian be a viscount, a dame, a belted earl? More specifically, could the Canadian publisher and controversialist Conrad Black become a peer of the (British) realm, with a seat in the House of Lords? No, he couldn't, said the government of Canada.

I would not have thought this was still a live issue. But, trying to make sense of the recent controversy over the possibility of Mr. Black becoming Lord Black, I was struck by how much the debate over honours and titles involved a grappling with history. Suddenly we heard politicians citing eighty-year-old resolutions of the House of Commons. Times and topics long since dispatched to the archives suddenly had front-page relevance.

Those who joined the argument about honours and titles seemed to be reliving a century and a half of Canada's perplexed, complicated relationship with nation and empire, with monarchy and democracy, with egalitarianism and celebrity. I wondered if Canada's historians could enlighten us about the history of honours and titles.

"There is a strain in Canadian history about honours – that honours are not a good thing," says historian Jacques Monet, formerly an advisor to the governor general. "Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie was not knighted, because even then many Liberals were opposed to honours that conferred titles. Wilfrid Laurier resisted being created a knight, but felt he had to accept because to have refused the knighthood in the midst of the royal jubilee [of 1897] would have been seen as an insult to the Queen."

Chris McCreery, a doctoral student at Queen's University, is writing a thesis he calls "Honours, Nationality, Citizenship in a Multicultural Polity" – an interest that began with youthful puzzlement about why and when Canadian prime ministers ceased to be knighted. The meaning of titles lies at the heart of his research, so much so that Conrad Black's lawyers contacted him for advice.

The recent press furor included frequent references to the Nickle resolution: Conservative backbencher William Nickle's 1919 motion that British honours should no longer be offered to Canadians. McCreery emphasizes this was only one step in a long series of Canadian decisions about honours. Indeed, there were two Nickle resolutions, in 1918 and 1919.

The Nickle debate confirmed there was bipartisan – and apparently pan-Canadian – consensus that titles were un-Canadian and antidemocratic. ... As early as 1919, Canadians were agreed on ending an honours system that they judged corrupt, foreign, and inappropriate.

In 1902, Prime Minister Laurier had declared by order-in-council that for anyone but the Canadian government to advise on honours for Canadians was "practically an invasion of the right of local self-government." By 1918 Laurier's Conservative successor, Sir Robert Borden, despite his own title, had come to share what had once been a Liberal opinion.

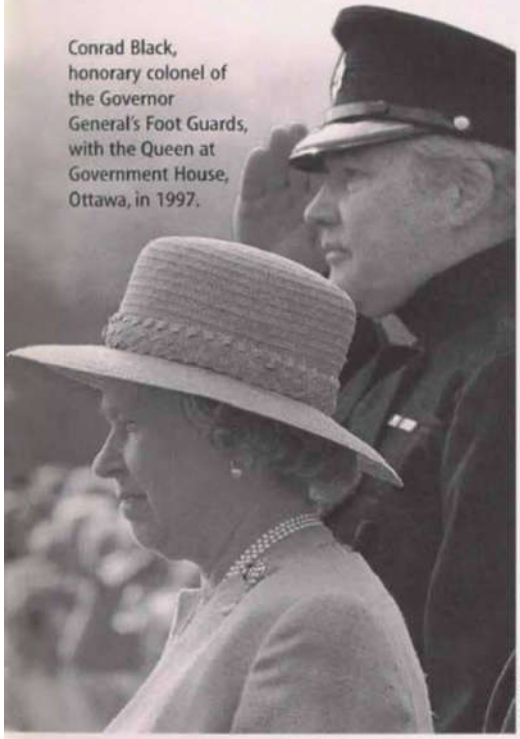
Borden had spent much of the First World War struggling to ensure that neither Canadian soldiers nor Canadian leaders were ordered around by their British counterparts. When Britain launched an orgy of title selling, Borden wanted Canadians to have no part of it. In a 1918 order-in-council, the government declared that hereditary titles "arouse in this country a sense of utter incongruity and a feeling of keen impatience," and repeated Laurier's declaration that honours to Canadians could come only on the recommendation of the Canadian government.

"The 1918 Nickle resolution just recapitulated the Borden order-in-council, but it fitted a skeptical public mood," says McCreery. Nickle first proposed ending hereditary titles only, but an amendment removed the word "hereditary." Borden, deep in negotiations with the British, persuaded the house to hedge its resolution. But a year later, with the war over, Parliament wanted action.

From eighty years on, what is most striking about these parliamentary debates is their strong consensus against honours that conferred titles. One lone MP who tried to make a case for titles was saluted – but only for "the robustness of his toryism." "In the

granting of titular distinctions in Great Britain, corruption prevails," said Nickle. "Let us build up a public domain which repudiates these things as an insult to democracy." Others made bitter reference to plutocrats and tea-party givers who were collecting titles, while the soldiers who suffered and died got nothing.

Ernest Lapointe said sardonically that "Beaverbrook," the new title of Canadian wheeler-dealer Max Aitken, proved he "had as much water in his nobility as there is in the capital stock of the companies he has organized on this side of the Atlantic." Sir Sam Hughes retorted: "Talk of the water in stocks—what about the water in pork?"—a stinging reference to the military rations supplied by meatpacker Sir Joseph Flavelle, the newly minted "bacon baron" of Toronto. Sir Sam Hughes felt obliged to insist that, despite his title, "his boys" knew he was just one of the boys. And Sir Wilfrid Laurier declared he was ready to throw his own title on the bonfire.



Conrad Black, honorary colonel of the Governor General's Foot Guards, with the Queen at Government House, Ottawa, in 1997.

CANADIAN PRESS

Borden's order-in-council establishing Canadian control had greater legal force, but the Nickle debate confirmed there was bipartisan—and apparently pan-Canadian—consensus that titles were un-Canadian and anti-democratic. In 1919 a bipartisan special committee of the House and a free vote of the Commons supported Nickle's resolution. As early as 1919, Canadians were agreed on ending an honours system that they judged corrupt, foreign, and inappropriate.

The recent controversies raised a secondary issue: dual citizenship. Could Canada block honours to a Canadian who was also a citizen of another country? Jacques Monet explains the procedures are clear here, too. (Indeed, Sir Robert Borden noted the same thing in 1918.) "In any country, there is a courtesy of consultation when an honour is to be given to a citizen of another country. In Canada, the protocol is that if a Canadian is to receive an honour from another country, the honour is not to be worn in Canada without the granting of permission from the office of the governor general." The official *Canada Gazette* routinely notes Canadians receiving France's Legion d'Honneur, other foreign awards—and British honours too. With regard to some recent knighthoods to Canadian/British dual citizens, the problem was largely the British government's neglect of the traditional courtesies.

Professor Monet notes, however, that for a position of political responsibility the standard is higher. "Appointment to the House of Lords is an 'honour' in the sense of being flattering, but it is also a political appointment: it gives the individual a role in the government of that country. So it ought to be understood that in taking on a place in government, one should give up one's citizenship in one's previous country." Monet points to the long-time Montreal academic Vaira Vike-Freiburga. She recently became president of Latvia—and gave up her Canadian citizenship to do so.

For Canadians inclined to become barons and viscounts of the British peerage, then, the lesson seems clear. Yielding up one's Canadian citizenship is part of the process. It's what your country expects. And serving one's country's good used to be the essence of what nobility was conceived to be.

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Album

Corporal punishment There is a proper position for firing a rifle. And an improper one. The young recruit in the middle of this picture, haunches raised, is about to learn the difference the hard way from his stick-wielding corporal. Will this blunt form of behaviour modification have a lasting effect? On an otherwise pleasant day in 1910, it probably doesn't much matter. The sergeant in the bottom right corner, with stick of his own and nearby elevated backside to belabour, has found – no surprise – something comic in the situation. But in five years time, some of these recruits to the Ninety-First Regiment of Canadian Highlanders will find themselves in trenches less tidy and more dangerous than this one at the Chedoke Rifle Range in west Hamilton, Ontario. An improper position could have a fatal consequence. And who will be wielding a stick then? ◘

Charles A. Pryke, who submitted this photograph to the *Beaver*, used to pass by the laughing sergeant – by the early 1930s a lieutenant-colonel – in the streets of Hamilton on his way to school. The photograph was taken by his father George Pryke, a veteran of the Boer War, a sergeant with the Ninety-First Regiment, and a printer with the *Hamilton Spectator* for fifty years. Charles Pryke lives in retirement in Hamilton. His father died in 1962.

Do you have an old photograph that captures a moment, important or ordinary, in our country's history? If you would like to submit it for possible publication, have it copied at your local photo shop (please don't send priceless originals) and send it to: Album, c/o *The Beaver*, #478 – 167 Lombard Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R3B 0T6. Include a brief description of the photo, including its date and location. If possible, identify people in the photograph and provide further information about the event or situation illustrated. To have your copy returned, please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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